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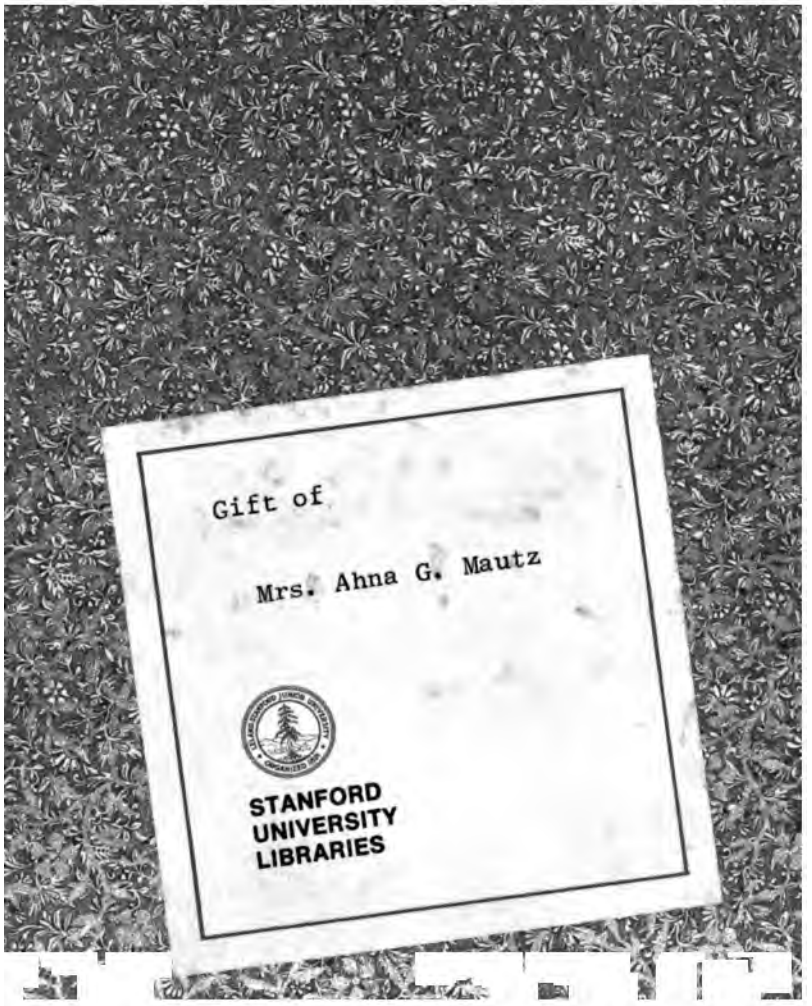
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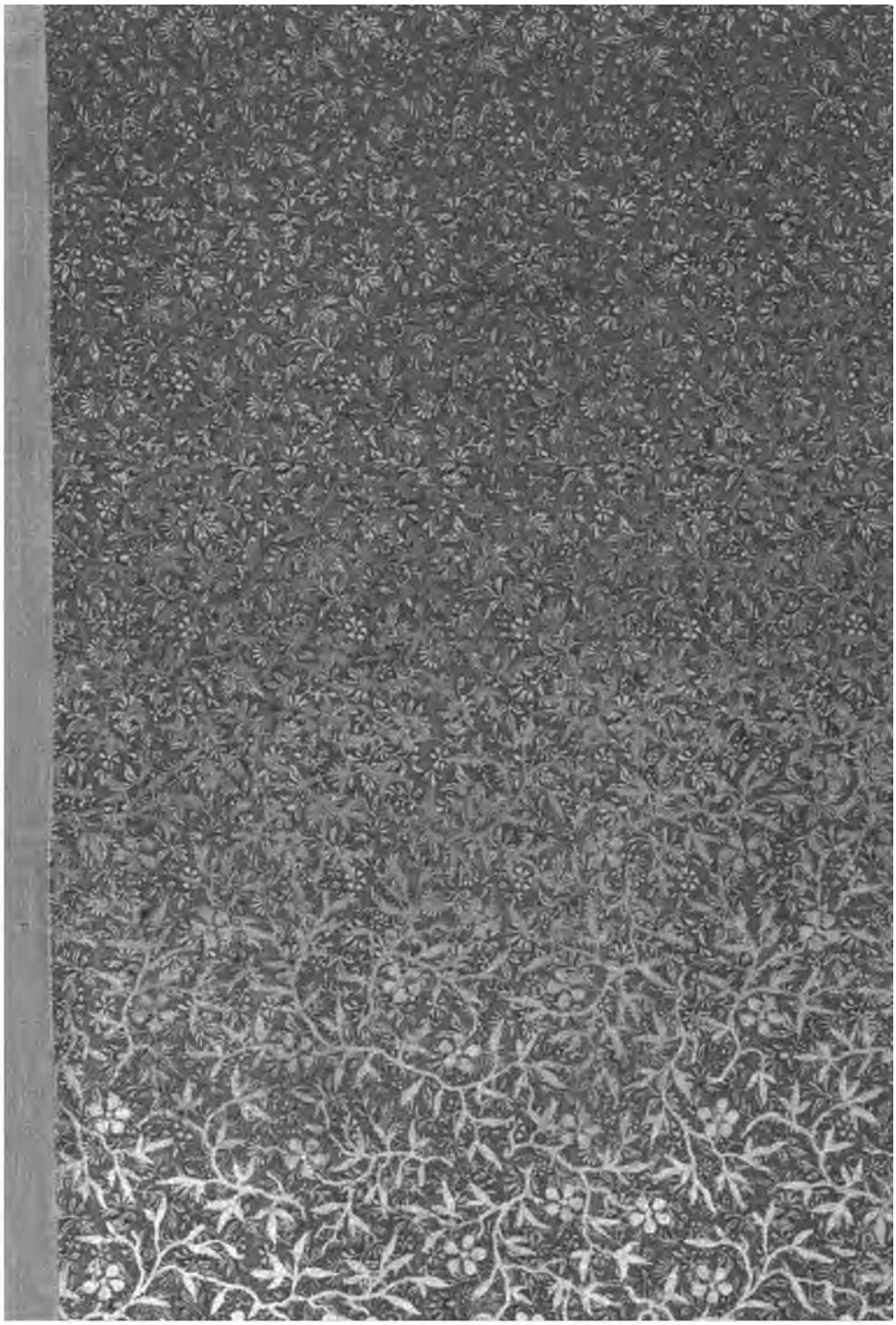

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AFTER THE ORIGINAL DRAWING BY CORTAZZO.

'They were so near that I could hear the clink of their swords and I cried, 'Fire.'''

(See page 94)

SHORT STORIES

OF THE

TRAGEDY AND COMEDY OF LIFE

BY

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

VOL. III

ST. DUNSTAN SOCIETY
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IN VARIOUS RÖLES

IN THE following reminiscences will frequently be mentioned a lady who played a great part in the annals of the police from 1848 to 1866. We will call her "Wanda von Chabert." Born in Galicia of German parents, and carefully brought up in every way, when only sixteen she married, from love, a rich and handsome officer of noble birth. The young couple, however, lived beyond their means, and when the husband died suddenly, two years after they were married, she was left anything but well off.

As Wanda had grown accustomed to luxury and amusement, a quiet life in her parents' house did not suit her any longer. Even while she was still in mourning for her husband, she allowed a Hungarian magnate to make love to her. She went off with him at a venture, and continued the same extravagant life which she had led when her husband was alive, of her own volition. At the end of two years, however, her lover left her in a town in North Italy, almost without means. She was thinking of going

"The sea-water seems to have a very remarkable effect upon your hair," Wanda said to him spitefully, in a whisper.

"Do you think so?" he replied, condescendingly.

"I fancy that at one time your hair was fair."

"You are mistaking me for somebody else," the Brazilian replied, quietly.

"I am not."

"For whom do you take me, pray?" he said with an insolent smile.

"For Don Escovedo."

"I am Count Dembizki from Valkynia," the former Brazilian said with a bow; "perhaps you would like to see my passport."

"Well, perhaps—"

And he had the impudence to show her his false passport.

A year afterward Wanda met Count Dembizki in Baden, near Vienna. His hair was still black, but he had a magnificent, full, black beard; he had become a Greek prince, and his name was Anastasio Maurokordatos. She met him once in one of the side walks in the park, where he could not avoid her. "If it goes on like this," she called out to him in a mocking voice, "the next time I see you, you will be king of some negro tribe or other."

That time, however, the Brazilian did not deny his identity; on the contrary, he surrendered at discretion, and implored her not to betray him. As she was not revengeful she pardoned him, after enjoying his terror for a time, and promised him that she would hold her tongue, as long as he did nothing contrary to the laws.

"First of all, I must beg you not to gamble."

"You have only to command; and we do not know each other in the future"

"I must certainly insist on that," she said maliciously.

The "Exotic Prince" had, however, made a conquest of the charming daughter of a wealthy Austrian count, and had cut out an excellent young officer, who was wooing her. The latter, in his despair, began to make love to Frau von Chabert, and at last told her he loved her. But she only laughed at him.

"You are very cruel," he stammered in confusion.

"I? What are you thinking about?" Wanda replied, still smiling; "all I mean is that you have directed your love to the wrong address, for Countess—"

"Do not speak of her; she is engaged to another man."

"As long as I choose to permit it," she said; "but what will you do if I bring her back to your arms? Will you still call me cruel?"

"Can you do this?" the young officer asked, in great excitement.

"Well, supposing I can do it, what shall I be then?"

"An angel, whom I shall thank on my knees."

A few days later, the rivals met at a coffee-house; the Greek prince began to lie and boast, and the Austrian officer gave him the lie direct. In consequence, it was arranged that they should fight a duel with pistols next morning in a wood close to Baden. But as the officer was leaving the house with his seconds the next morning, a Police Commissary came

up to him and begged him not to trouble himself any further about the matter, but another time to be more careful before accepting a challenge.

"What does it mean?" the officer asked, in some surprise.

"It means that this Maurokordatos is a dangerous swindler and adventurer, whom we have just taken into custody."

"He is not a prince?"

"No; a circus rider."

An hour later, the officer received a letter from the charming Countess, in which she humbly begged for pardon. The happy lover set off to go and see her immediately, but on the way a sudden thought struck him, and so he turned back in order to thank beautiful Wanda, as he had promised, on his knees.

THE FALSE GEMS

M. LANTIN had met the young woman at a *soirée*, at the home of the assistant chief of his bureau, and at first sight had fallen madly in love with her.

She was the daughter of a country physician who had died some months previously. She had come to live in Paris, with her mother, who visited much among her acquaintances, in the hope of making a favorable marriage for her daughter. They were poor and honest, quiet and unaffected.

The young girl was a perfect type of the virtuous woman whom every sensible young man dreams of one day winning for life. Her simple beauty had the charm of angelic modesty, and the imperceptible smile which constantly hovered about her lips seemed to be the reflection of a pure and lovely soul. Her praises resounded on every side. People were never tired of saying: "Happy the man who wins her love! He could not find a better wife."

Now M. Lantin enjoyed a snug little income of $700, and, thinking he could safely assume the responsibilities of matrimony, proposed to this model young girl and was accepted.

He was unspeakably happy with her; she governed his household so cleverly and economically that they seemed to live in luxury. She lavished the most delicate attentions on her husband, coaxed and fondled him, and the charm of her presence was so great that six years after their marriage M. Lantin discovered that he loved his wife even more than during the first days of their honeymoon.

He only felt inclined to blame her for two things: her love of the theater, and a taste for false jewelry. Her friends (she was acquainted with some officers' wives) frequently procured for her a box at the theater, often for the first representations of the new plays; and her husband was obliged to accompany her, whether he willed or not, to these amusements, though they bored him excessively after a day's labor at the office.

After a time, M. Lantin begged his wife to get some lady of her acquaintance to accompany her. She was at first opposed to such an arrangement; but, after much persuasion on his part, she finally consented—to the infinite delight of her husband.

Now, with her love for the theater came also the desire to adorn her person. True, her costumes remained as before, simple, and in the most correct taste; but she soon began to ornament her ears with huge rhinestones which glittered and sparkled like real diamonds. Around her neck she wore strings of false pearls, and on her arms bracelets of imitation gold.

Her husband frequently remonstrated with her, saying:

"My dear, as you cannot afford to buy real diamonds, you ought to appear adorned with your beauty and modesty alone, which are the rarest ornaments of your sex."

But she would smile sweetly, and say:

"What can I do? I am so fond of jewelry. It is my only weakness. We cannot change our natures."

Then she would roll the pearl necklaces around her fingers, and hold up the bright gems for her husband's admiration, gently coaxing him:

"Look! are they not lovely? One would swear they were real."

M. Lantin would then answer, smilingly:

"You have Bohemian tastes, my dear."

Often of an evening, when they were enjoying a tête-à-tête by the fireside, she would place on the tea table the leather box containing the "trash," as M. Lantin called it. She would examine the false gems with a passionate attention as though they were in some way connected with a deep and secret joy; and she often insisted on passing a necklace around her husband's neck, and laughing heartily would exclaim: "How droll you look!" Then she would throw herself into his arms and kiss him affectionately.

One evening in winter she attended the opera, and on her return was chilled through and through. The next morning she coughed, and eight days later she died of inflammation of the lungs.

M. Lantin's despair was so great that his hair

became white in one month. He wept unceasingly; his heart was torn with grief, and his mind was haunted by the remembrance, the smile, the voice—by every charm of his beautiful, dead wife.

Time, the healer, did not assuage his grief. Often during office hours, while his colleagues were discussing the topics of the day, his eyes would suddenly fill with tears, and he would give vent to his grief in heartrending sobs. Everything in his wife's room remained as before her decease; and here he was wont to seclude himself daily and think of her who had been his treasure—the joy of his existence.

But life soon became a struggle. His income, which in the hands of his wife had covered all household expenses, was now no longer sufficient for his own immediate wants; and he wondered how she could have managed to buy such excellent wines, and such rare delicacies, things which he could no longer procure with his modest resources.

He incurred some debts and was soon reduced to absolute poverty. One morning, finding himself without a cent in his pocket, he resolved to sell something, and, immediately, the thought occurred to him of disposing of his wife's paste jewels. He cherished in his heart a sort of rancor against the false gems. They had always irritated him in the past, and the very sight of them spoiled somewhat the memory of his lost darling.

To the last days of her life, she had continued to make purchases; bringing home new gems almost every evening. He decided to sell the heavy necklace which she seemed to prefer, and which, he thought, ought to be worth about six or seven francs; for

although paste it was, nevertheless, of very fine workmanship.

He put it in his pocket and started out in search of a jeweler's shop. He entered the first one he saw; feeling a little ashamed to expose his misery, and also to offer such a worthless article for sale.

"Sir," said he to the merchant, "I would like to know what this is worth."

The man took the necklace, examined it, called his clerk and made some remarks in an undertone; then he put the ornament back on the counter, and looked at it from a distance to judge of the effect.

M. Lantin was annoyed by all this detail and was on the point of saying: "Oh! I know well enough it is not worth anything," when the jeweler said: "Sir, that necklace is worth from twelve to fifteen thousand francs; but I could not buy it unless you tell me now whence it comes."

The widower opened his eyes wide and remained gaping, not comprehending the merchant's meaning. Finally he stammered: "You say—are you sure?" The other replied dryly: "You can search elsewhere and see if anyone will offer you more. I consider it worth fifteen thousand at the most. Come back here if you cannot do better."

M. Lantin, beside himself with astonishment, took up the necklace and left the store. He wished time for reflection.

Once outside, he felt inclined to laugh, and said to himself: "The fool! Had I only taken him at his word! That jeweler cannot distinguish real diamonds from paste."

A few minutes after, he entered another store in

the Rue de la Paix. As soon as the proprietor glanced at the necklace, he cried out:

"Ah, *parbleu!* I know it well; it was bought here."

M. Lantin was disturbed, and asked:

"How much is it worth?"

"Well, I sold it for twenty thousand francs. I am willing to take it back for eighteen thousand when you inform me, according to our legal formality, how it comes to be in your possession."

This time M. Lantin was dumfounded. He replied:

"But—but—examine it well. Until this moment I was under the impression that it was paste."

Said the jeweler:

"What is your name, sir?"

"Lantin—I am in the employ of the Minister of the Interior. I live at No. 16 Rue des Martyrs."

The merchant looked through his books, found the entry, and said: "That necklace was sent to Mme. Lantin's address, 16 Rue des Martyrs, July 20, 1876."

The two men looked into each other's eyes—the widower speechless with astonishment, the jeweler scenting a thief. The latter broke the silence by saying:

"Will you leave this necklace here for twenty-four hours? I will give you a receipt."

"Certainly," answered M. Lantin, hastily. Then, putting the ticket in his pocket, he left the store.

He wandered aimlessly through the streets, his mind in a state of dreadful confusion. He tried to reason, to understand. His wife could not afford to purchase such a costly ornament. Certainly not. But,

then, it must have been a present!—a present!—a present from whom? Why was it given her?

He stopped and remained standing in the middle of the street. A horrible doubt entered his mind—she? Then all the other gems must have been presents, too! The earth seemed to tremble beneath him,—the tree before him was falling—throwing up his arms, he fell to the ground, unconscious. He recovered his senses in a pharmacy into which the passers-by had taken him, and was then taken to his home. When he arrived he shut himself up in his room and wept until nightfall. Finally, overcome with fatigue, he threw himself on the bed, where he passed an uneasy, restless night.

The following morning he arose and prepared to go to the office. It was hard to work after such a shock. He sent a letter to his employer requesting to be excused. Then he remembered that he had to return to the jeweler's. He did not like the idea; but he could not leave the necklace with that man. So he dressed and went out.

It was a lovely day; a clear blue sky smiled on the busy city below, and men of leisure were strolling about with their hands in their pockets.

Observing them, M. Lantin said to himself: "The rich, indeed, are happy. With money it is possible to forget even the deepest sorrow. One can go where one pleases, and in travel find that distraction which is the surest cure for grief. Oh! if I were only rich!"

He began to feel hungry, but his pocket was empty. He again remembered the necklace. Eighteen thousand francs! Eighteen thousand francs! What a sum!

He soon arrived in the Rue de la Paix, opposite the jeweler's. Eighteen thousand francs! Twenty times he resolved to go in, but shame kept him back. He was hungry, however,—very hungry, and had not a cent in his pocket. He decided quickly, ran across the street in order not to have time for reflection, and entered the store.

The proprietor immediately came forward, and politely offered him a chair; the clerks glanced at him knowingly.

"I have made inquiries, M. Lantin," said the jeweler, "and if you are still resolved to dispose of the gems, I am ready to pay you the price I offered."

"Certainly, sir," stammered M. Lantin.

Whereupon the proprietor took from a drawer eighteen large bills, counted and handed them to M. Lantin, who signed a receipt and with a trembling hand put the money into his pocket.

As he was about to leave the store, he turned toward the merchant, who still wore the same knowing smile, and lowering his eyes, said:

"I have—I have other gems which I have received from the same source. Will you buy them also?"

The merchant bowed: "Certainly, sir."

M. Lantin said gravely: "I will bring them to you." An hour later he returned with the gems.

The large diamond earrings were worth twenty thousand francs; the bracelets thirty-five thousand; the rings, sixteen thousand; a set of emeralds and sapphires, fourteen thousand; a gold chain with solitaire pendant, forty thousand—making the sum of one hundred and forty-three thousand francs.

The jeweler remarked, jokingly:

"There was a person who invested all her earnings in precious stones."

M. Lantin replied, seriously:

"It is only another way of investing one's money."

That day he lunched at Voisin's and drank wine worth twenty francs a bottle. Then he hired a carriage and made a tour of the Bois, and as he scanned the various turn-outs with a contemptuous air he could hardly refrain from crying out to the occupants:

"I, too, am rich!—I am worth two hundred thousand francs."

Suddenly he thought of his employer. He drove up to the office, and entered gaily, saying:

"Sir, I have come to resign my position. I have just inherited three hundred thousand francs."

He shook hands with his former colleagues and confided to them some of his projects for the future; then he went off to dine at the Café Anglais.

He seated himself beside a gentleman of aristocratic bearing, and during the meal informed the latter confidentially that he had just inherited a fortune of four hundred thousand francs.

For the first time in his life he was not bored at the theater, and spent the remainder of the night in a gay frolic.

Six months afterward he married again. His second wife was a very virtuous woman, with a violent temper. She caused him much sorrow.

COUNTESS SATAN

I.

THEY were discussing dynamite, the social revolution, Nihilism, and even those who cared least about politics had something to say. Some were alarmed, others philosophized, and others again tried to smile.

"Bah!" N—— said, "when we are all blown up, we shall see what it is like. Perhaps, after all, it may be an amusing sensation, provided one goes high enough."

"But we shall not be blown up at all," G——, the optimist, said, interrupting him. "It is all a romance."

"You are mistaken, my dear fellow," Jules de C—— replied. "It is like a romance, but with this confounded Nihilism, everything is the same; it would be a mistake to trust to it. For instance, the manner in which I made Bakounine's acquaintance—"

They knew that he was a good narrator, and it was no secret that his life had been an adventurous one, so they drew closer to him, and listened intently. This is what he told them:

II

"I met Countess Nioska W——, that strange woman who was usually called Countess Satan, in Naples. I immediately attached myself to her out of curiosity, and soon fell in love with her. Not that she was beautiful, for she was a Russian with the bad characteristics of the Russian type. She was thin and squat at the same time, while her face was sallow and puffy, with high cheek-bones and a Cossack's nose. But her conversation bewitched everyone.

"She was many-sided, learned, a philosopher, scientifically depraved, satanic. Perhaps the word is rather pretentious, but it exactly expresses what I want to say, for in other words she loved evil for the sake of evil. She rejoiced in other people's vices; she liked to sow the seeds of evil, in order to see it flourish. And that, too, by fraud on an enormous scale. It was not enough for her to corrupt individuals, she only did that to keep her hand in; what she wished to do was to corrupt the masses. By slightly altering it after her own fashion, she might have used Caligula's famous wish. She also might have wished that the whole human race had but one head; not in order that she might cut it off, but

that she might make the philosophy of Nihilism flourish there.

"What a temptation to become the lord and master of such a monster! I allowed myself to be tempted, and undertook the adventure. The means came unsought for by me, and the only thing that I had to do was to show myself more perverted and satanic than she was herself. And so I played the devil.

"'Yes,' I said, 'we writers are the best workmen for doing evil, as our books may be bottles of poison. The so-called men of action only turn the handle of the *mitrailleuse* which we have loaded. Formulas will destroy the world, and it is we who invent them.'

"'That is true,' said she, 'and that is what is wanting in Bakounine, I am sorry to say.'

"That name was constantly in her mouth. So I asked her for details, which she gave me, as she knew the man intimately.

"'After all,' she said, with a contemptuous grimace, 'he is only a kind of Garibaldi.'

"She told me, although she made fun of him as she did so, about that 'Odyssey' of the barricades and of the hulks which made up Bakounine's history, and which is, nevertheless, the exact truth; about his adventures as chief of the insurgents at Prague and then at Dresden; of his first death sentence; about his imprisonment at Olmütz, in the casemates of the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, and in a subterranean dungeon at Schüsselburg; about his exile to Siberia and his wonderful escape down the river Amour, on a Japanese coasting-vessel, and about his

final arrival, by way of Yokohama and San Francisco, in London, whence he was directing all the operations of Nihilism.

"'You see,' she said, 'he is a thorough adventurer, and now all his adventures are over. He got married at Tobolsk and became a mere respectable, middle-class man. And then he has no individual ideas. Herzen, the pamphleteer of "Kolokol," inspired him with the only fertile phrase that he ever uttered: "Land and Liberty!" But that is not yet the definite formula, the general formula—what I may call the dynamite formula. At best, Bakounine would only become an incendiary, and burn down cities. And what is that, I ask you? Bah! A second-hand Rostoptchin! He wants a prompter, and I offered to become his, but he did not take me seriously.'

* * * * * * *

"It would be useless to enter into all the psychological details which marked the course of my passion for the Countess, and to explain to you more fully the curious and daily growing attraction which she had for me. It was getting exasperating, and the more so as she resisted me as stoutly as the shyest of innocents could have done. At the end of a month of mad Satanism, I saw what her game was. Do you know what she intended? She meant to make me Bakounine's prompter, or, at any rate, that is what she said. But no doubt she reserved the right to herself—at least that is how I understood her—to prompt the prompter, and my passion for her, which she purposely left unsatisfied, assured her that absolute power over me.

"All this may appear madness to you, but it is, nevertheless, the exact truth. In short, one morning she bluntly made the offer:

"'Become Bakounine's soul, and you shall possess me.'

"Of course I accepted, for it was too fantastically strange to refuse. Don't you think so? What an adventure! What luck! A number of letters between the Countess and Bakounine prepared the way; I was introduced to him at his house, and they discussed me there. I became a sort of Western prophet, a mystic charmer who was ready to nihilize the Latin races, the Saint Paul of the new religion of nothingness, and at last a day was fixed for us to meet in London. He lived in a small, one-storied house in Pimlico, with a tiny garden in front, and nothing noticeable about it.

"We were first of all shown into the commonplace parlor of all English homes, and then upstairs. The room where the Countess and I were left was small, and very badly furnished. It had a square table with writing materials on it, in the center of the room. This was his sanctuary. The deity soon appeared, and I saw him in flesh and bone—especially in flesh, for he was enormously stout. His broad face, with prominent cheek-bones, in spite of fat; a nose like a double funnel; and small, sharp eyes, which had a magnetic look, proclaimed the Tartar, the old Turanian blood which produced the Attilas, the Genghis-Khans, the Tamerlanes. The obesity which is characteristic of nomad races, who are always on horseback or driving, added to his Asiatic look. The man was certainly not a European, a

slave, a descendant of the deistic Aryans, but a scion of the atheistic hordes who had several times already almost overrun Europe, and who, instead of ideas of progress, have Nihilism buried in their hearts.

"I was astonished, for I had not expected that the majesty of a whole race could be thus revived in a man, and my stupefaction increased after an hour's conversation. I could quite understand why such a Colossus had not wished for the Countess as his Egeria; she was a silly child to have dreamed of acting such a part to such a thinker. She had not felt the profoundness of that horrible philosophy which was hidden under his material activity, nor had she seen the prophet under this hero of the barricades. Perhaps he had not thought it advisable to reveal himself to her; but he revealed himself to me, and inspired me with terror.

"A prophet? Oh! yes. He thought himself an Attila, and foresaw the consequences of his revolution; it was not only from instinct but also from theory that he urged a nation on to Nihilism. The phrase is not his, but Turgenieff's, I believe, but the idea certainly belonged to him. He got his programme of agricultural communism from Herzen, and his destructive radicalism from Pougatcheff, but he did not stop there. I mean that he went on to evil for the sake of evil. Herzen wished for the happiness of the Slav peasant; Pougatcheff wanted to be elected Emperor, but all that Bakounine wanted was to overthrow the actual order of things, no matter by what means, and to replace social concentration by a universal upheaval.

"It was the dream of a Tartar; it was true Nihilism pushed to extreme and practical conclusions. It was, in a word, the applied philosophy of chance, the indeterminate end of anarchy. Monstrous it may be, but grand in its monstrosity!

"And you must note that the typical man of action so despised by the Countess was, in Bakounine, the gigantic dreamer whom I have just shown to you. His dream did not remain a dream, but began to be realized. It was by the care of Bakounine that the Nihilistic party became an entity; a party in which there is a little of everything, you know, but on the whole, a formidable party, the advanced guard of which is true Nihilism, whose object is nothing less than to destroy the Western world, to see it blossom from under the ruins of a general dispersion, the last conception of modern Tartarism.

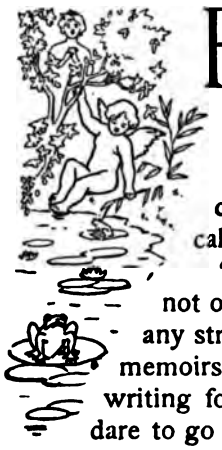
"I never saw Bakounine again, for the Countess's conquest would have been too dearly bought by any attempt to act a comedy with this 'Old-Man-of-the-Mountain.' And besides that, after this visit, poor Countess Satan appeared to me quite silly. Her famous Satanism was nothing but the flicker of a spirit-lamp, after the general conflagration of which the other had dreamed. She had certainly shown herself very silly, when she could not understand that prodigious monster. And as she had seduced me only by her intellect and her perversity, I was disgusted as soon as she laid aside that mask. I left her without telling her of my intention, and never saw her again, either.

"No doubt they both took me for a spy from the 'Third Section of the Imperial Chancellery.' In that

case, they must have thought me very clever to have escaped discovery, and all I have to do is to look out, lest any affiliated members of their society recognize me!"

Then he smiled and, turning to the waiter who had just come in, said: "Open another bottle of champagne, and make the cork pop! It will, at any rate, remind us of the day when we ourselves shall be blown up with dynamite."

A USEFUL HOUSE



ROYAUMONT'S fat sides shook with laughter at the mere recollection of the funny story that he had promised to his friends, and throwing himself back in the great arm-chair, which he completely filled, that confirmed gossip and busy-body, as they called him at the club, at last said:

"It is perfectly true. Bordenave does not owe anyone a penny and can go through any street he likes, and publish those famous memoirs of sheriff's officers, which he has been writing for the last ten years, when he did not dare to go out, and in which he carefully brought out the characters and peculiarities of all those generous distributors of stamped paper with whom he had had dealings—their tricks and wiles, their weaknesses, their jokes, their manner of performing their duties, sometimes with brutal rudeness and at others with cunning good nature, now embarrassed and almost ashamed of their work, and again ironically jovial; as well as the artifices of clerks to get a few

crumbs from their employer's cake. The book will soon be published, and Machin, the 'Vaudeville' writer, has promised him a preface, so that it will be a most amusing work. You are surprised, eh? Confess that you are absolutely surprised, and I will lay you any bet you like that you will not guess how our excellent friend, whose existence is an inexplicable problem, has been able to settle with his creditors, and suddenly produce the requisite amount."

"Do get to the facts, confound it," Captain Hardeur said, who was growing tired of all this verbiage.

"All right, I will get to them as quickly as possible," Royaumont replied, throwing the stump of his cigar into the fire. "I will clear my throat and begin. I suppose you all of you know that two better friends than Bordenave and Quillanet do not exist; neither of them could do without the other, and they have ended by dressing alike, by having the same gestures, the same laugh, the same walk, and the same inflections of voice, so that one would think that some close bond united them, and that they had been brought up together from childhood.

"There is, however, this difference between them, that Bordenave is completely ruined and that all that he possesses are bundles of mortgages, laughable parchments which attest his ancient race, and chimerical hopes of inheriting money some day, though these expectations are already heavily hypothecated. Consequently he is always on the lookout for some fresh expedient for raising money, though he is superbly indifferent about everything; while Sebastien Quillanet, of the banking house of Quillanet Brothers, must have an income of eight hundred thousand francs

a year, but is descended from an obscure laborer who managed to secure some of the national property. Then he became an army contractor, speculated on defeat as well as on victory, and does not know now what to do with his money.

"But as the millionaire is timid, dull, and always bored, the spendthrift amuses him by his impertinent ways and jokes; he prompts him when he is at a loss for an answer, extricates him out of his difficulties, serves as his guide in the great forests of Paris which are strewn with so many pitfalls, and helps him to avoid those vulgar adventures which socially ruin a man, no matter how well ballasted he may be. Then he points out to him what women would make suitable mistresses for him, who make a man noted, and give the effect of some rare and beautiful flower pinned into his buttonhole. He is the confidant of his intrigues, his guest when he gives small, special entertainments, his daily, familiar table companion, and the buffoon whose sly humor stimulates one, and whose worst witticisms you tolerate."

"Really, really," the captain interrupted him, "you have been going on for more than a quarter of an hour without saying anything."

But Royaumont shrugged his shoulders and continued:

"Oh! you can be very tiresome when you please, my dear fellow! Last year, when he was at daggers drawn with his people, who were deafening him with recriminations, were worrying him and threatening him with a lot of annoyance, Quillanet got married. It was a marriage of reason, which apparently changed his habits and his tastes, more especially as the

banker was at that time keeping a perfect little marvel of a woman, a Parisian jewel of unspeakable attraction and of bewitching delicacy, that adorable Suzette Marly, who is just like a pocket Venus, and who in some prior stage of existence must have been Phryne or Lesbia. Of course he did not get rid of her, but as he was bound to take some judicious precautions, which are necessary for a man who is deceiving his wife, he rented and furnished a house, with a courtyard in front, and a garden at the back, which one might think had been built to shelter some amorous folly. It was the ideal that he had dreamed of, warm, snug, elegant, the walls covered with silk hangings of subdued tints, large pier-glasses, allegorical pictures, and filled with luxurious, low furniture that seemed to invite caresses and embraces.

"Bordenave occupied the ground floor, and the next floor served as a shrine for the banker and his mistress. Well, just a week ago, in order to hide the situation better, Bordenave asked Quillanet and some other friends to one of those luncheons which he understands so well how to order, such a delicious luncheon, that before it was quite over, every man had a woman on his lap, and was asking himself whether a kiss from coaxing and naughty lips was not a thousand times more intoxicating than the finest old brandy or the choicest vintage wines, when the butler came in with an embarrassed look, and whispered something to him.

"'Tell the gentleman that he has made a mistake, and ask him to leave me in peace.' Bordenave replied to him in an angry voice. The servant went out and returned immediately to say that the intruder

was using threats, that he refused to leave the house, and even spoke of having recourse to the commissary of police. Bordenave frowned, threw his table napkin down, upset two glasses, and swaggered out with a red face, swearing and ejaculating:

"'This is rather too much, and the fellow shall find out what going out of the window means, if he will not leave by the door.' But in the anteroom he found himself face to face with a very cool, polite, impassive gentleman, who said very quietly to him:

"'You are Count Robert de Bordenave, I believe, Monsieur?'

"'Yes, Monsieur.'

"'And the lease that you signed at the lawyer's, Monsieur Albin Calvert, in the Rue du Faubourg-Poissonnière, is in your name, I believe?'

"'Certainly, Monsieur.'

"'Then I regret extremely to have to tell you that if you are not in a position to pay the various accounts which different people have intrusted to me for collection here, I shall be obliged to seize all the furniture, pictures, plate, clothes, etc., which are here, in the presence of two witnesses who are waiting for me downstairs in the street.'

"'I suppose this is some joke, Monsieur?'

"'It would be a very poor joke, Monsieur le Comte, and one which I should certainly not allow myself toward you!'

"The situation was absolutely critical and ridiculous, the more so, that in the dining-room the women, who were slightly tipsy, were tapping the wineglasses with their spoons, and calling for him. What could he do except explain his misadventure to

Quillanet, who became sobered immediately, and rather than see his shrine of love violated, his secret sin disclosed, and his pictures, ornaments, and furniture sold, gave a check in due form for the claim there and then, though with a very wry face. And in spite of this, some people will deny that men who are utterly broke often have a stroke of luck!"

THE VIATICUM

"AFTER all," Count d'Avorsy said, stirring his tea with the slow movements of a prelate, "what truth was there in everything that was said at Court, almost without any restraint? Did the Empress whose beauty has been ruined by some secret grief, who will no longer see anyone and who soothes her continual mental trouble by journeys without object and without rest, in foggy and melancholy islands, did she really forget that Cæsar's wife ought not even to be suspected, and did she really give herself to that strange and attractive corrupter, Ladislas Ferkoz?"

The bright night seemed to be scattering handfuls of stars into the placid sea, which was as calm as a blue pond slumbering in the depths of a forest. Among the tall, climbing roses, which hung like a mantle of yellow flowers from the fretted baluster of the terrace, there stood out in the distance the illuminated

fronts of the hotels and villas, and occasionally women's laughter was heard above the dull, monotonous sound of surf and the noise of the fog-horns.

Then Captain Sigmund Oroshaz, whose sad and pensive face—the face of a soldier who has seen too much slaughter and too many charnel-houses—was marked by a large scar, raised his head and said in a grave, haughty voice:

"Nobody has lied in accusing Maria-Gloriosa of adultery, and nobody has calumniated the Empress and her minister, whom God has damned in the other world. Ladislas Ferkoz was his sovereign's lover until he died. He made his august master ridiculous and almost odious; for the man, no matter who he be, who allows himself to be flouted by a creature who is unworthy of bearing his name and of sharing his bread, who puts up with such disgrace and does not crush the guilty couple with all the weight of his power, is not worth pity, nor does he deserve to be spared the mockery. And if I affirm it so harshly, my dear Count—although years and years have drawn a veil over that old story—the reason is that I saw the last chapter of it, in spite of myself, for I was the officer on duty at the palace, and obliged to obey orders, just as if I had been on the field of battle. On that day I was on duty near Maria-Gloriosa."

Madame de Laumières, who had begun an animated conversation on crinolines, amid the fragrant odor of Russian cigarettes, and was making fun of the striking toilettes which she had amused herself by examining through her opera glass a few hours previously at the races, stopped. Even when she was talking most volubly she always kept her ears open

to hear what was being said around her, and as her curiosity was aroused, she interrupted Sigmund Oroshaz.

"Ah! Monsieur," she said, "you are not going to leave our curiosity unsatisfied. A story about the Empress puts all our scandals on the beach and all our questions of dress into the shade, and, I am sure," she added with a smile at the corners of her mouth, "that even our friend Madame d'Ormonde will leave off flirting with Monsieur Le Brassard to listen to you."

Captain Oroshaz continued, with his large blue eyes full of recollection:

"It was in the middle of a grand ball that the Emperor was giving on the occasion of some family anniversary—I forget exactly what—and Maria-Gloriosa, who was in great grief, as she had heard that her lover was ill far away from her, and his life almost despaired of, was going about with a face as pale as that of 'Our Lady of Sorrows.' She seemed to be a soul in affliction, appeared to be ashamed of her bare shoulders, as if she were being made a parade of in the light, while he, the adored of her heart, was lying on a bed of sickness, getting weaker every moment, longing for her and perhaps calling for her in his distress. About midnight, when the violins were striking up the quadrille in which the Emperor was to dance with the wife of the French Ambassador, one of the ladies of honor, Countess Szegedin, went up to the Empress, and whispered a few words to her in a very low voice. Maria-Gloriosa grew still paler, but mastered her emotion and waited until the end of the last figure. Then, however, she could not restrain herself any longer,

but without giving any pretext for running away in such a manner, and leaning on the arm of her lady of honor, she made her way through the crowd as if she were in a dream, and went to her own apartments. I told you that I was on duty that evening at the door of her rooms, and according to etiquette, I was about to salute her respectfully, but she did not give me time.

"'Captain,' she said excitedly and vehemently, 'give orders to my own private coachman, Hans Hildersheim, to get a carriage ready for me immediately.' But thinking better of it she quickly went on: 'No, we should only lose time, and every minute is precious; give me a cloak quickly, Madame, and a lace veil, we will go out of one of the small doors in the park, and take the first conveyance we see.'

"She wrapped herself in her furs, hid her face in her mantilla, and I accompanied her, without at first knowing what this mystery was, and where we were going to, on this mad expedition. I hailed a cab that was dawdling by the side of the pavement, and when the Empress in a low voice gave me the address of Ladislas Ferkoz, the Minister of State, in spite of my usual phlegm, I felt a vague shiver of emotion, one of those movements of hesitation and recoil, from which the bravest are not exempt at times. But how could I get out of the unpleasant rôle of her companion, and how show want of politeness to a sovereign who had completely lost her head? Accordingly, we started, but the Empress did not pay any more attention to me than if I had not been sitting by her side in that narrow conveyance. She

stifled her sobs with her pocket handkerchief, muttered a few incoherent words, and occasionally trembled from head to foot. Her lover's name rose to her lips as if it had been a response in a litany, and I thought that she was praying to the Virgin that she might not arrive too late to see Ladislas Ferkoz again in the possession of his faculties, and keep him alive for a few hours. Suddenly, as if in reply to herself, she said: 'I will not cry any more; he must see me looking beautiful, so that he may remember me, even in death!'

"When we arrived, I saw that we were expected, and that they had not doubted that the Empress would come to close her lover's eyes with a last kiss. She left me abruptly, and hurried to Ladislas Ferkoz's room, without even shutting the doors behind her. His beautiful, sensual, gypsy head stood out from the whiteness of the pillows; but his face was quite bloodless, and there was no life left there, except in his large strange eyes, which were striated with gold, like the eyes of an astrologer or of a bearded vulture.

"The cold numbness of the death struggle had already laid hold of his robust body and paralyzed his lips and his arms. He could not reply even by a sound of tenderness to Maria-Gloriosa's wild lamentations and amorous cries. Neither reply nor smile, alas! But his eyes dilated and glistened like the last flame that shoots up from an expiring fire, and filled her with a world of dying thoughts, of divine recollections, of delirious love. They appeared to envelop her in kisses, they spoke to her, they thanked her, they followed her movements, and seemed delighted at her grief. And as if she were replying to their

mute supplications, as if she had understood them, Maria-Gloriosa suddenly tore off her lace veil, threw aside her fur cloak, stood erect beside the dying man, whose eyes were radiant, in her supreme beauty, with bare shoulders, a bust like marble, and fair hair, in which diamonds glistened, surrounding her proud head, like that of the Goddess Diana, the huntress, and stretched her arms out toward him in an attitude of love, of embrace, and of blessing. He looked at her in ecstasy, he feasted on her beauty, and seemed to be having a terrible struggle with death, in order that he might gaze at that apparition of love a little longer, see her beyond the confines of eternal sleep and so prolong this unexpected dream. And when he felt that it was all over with him, and that even his eyes were growing dim, two great tears rolled down his cheeks—

"When Maria-Gloriosa saw that he was dead, she piously and devoutly kissed his lips and closed his eyes, like a priest who at evening service closes the gold tabernacle after Benediction. Then, without exchanging a word, we returned through the darkness to the palace where the ball was still going on."

* * * * * * *

There was a minute's silence, and while Madame de Laumières, who was very much touched by this story and whose nerves were rather highly strung, was drying her tears behind her open fan, the harsh and shrill voices of some fast women returning from the Casino, by the strange irony of fate, suddenly struck up an idiotic song which was then in vogue: "Oh! the poor, oh! the poor, oh! the poor, dear girl!"

MAD

I.

FOR days and days, nights and nights, I had dreamed of that first kiss which was to consecrate our engagement, and I knew not on what spot I should put my lips, madly thirsting as they were for her beauty and her youth. Neither on her forehead—that was accustomed to family caresses; nor on her light hair, which mercenary hands had dressed; nor on her eyes, whose turned-up lashes looked like little wings, because that would have made me think of the farewell caress which closes the eyelids of some dead woman whom one has adored. Not on her lovely mouth, which I will not, which I must not possess until that divine moment when Elaine will at last belong to me altogether and for always, but on that delicious little dimple which

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This manuscript was found among the papers of Viscount Jacques de X—— who committed suicide a few years ago, in his room in a hotel at Piombières.

comes in one of her cheeks when she is happy, when she smiles, and which excited me as much as did her voice of languorous softness, on that evening when our wooing began at the Souverettes'.

Our parents were walking slowly up and down under the chestnut-trees in the garden, and had left us alone altogether for a few minutes. I went up to her and took both her trembling hands into mine, and gently drawing her close to me, I whispered:

"How happy I am, Elaine, and how I love you!" Then I kissed her almost timidly, on the dimple. She trembled, as if from the pain of a burn, blushed deeply and with an affectionate look, she said: "I love you, too, Jacques, and I am very happy!"

That embarrassment, the sudden emotion which revealed the perfect spotlessness of a pure mind, the instinctive recoil of virginity, her childlike innocence, that blush of modesty, delighted me above everything as a presage of happiness. It seemed to me as if I were unworthy of her. I was almost ashamed of bringing and putting into her small, saintlike hands the remains of a damaged heart, a heart polluted by debauchery, a miserable thing which had served as a toy for unworthy mistresses, which was intoxicated with lies, and felt as if it would die of bitterness and disgust.

II.

How quickly she has become accustomed to me! How suddenly she has turned into a woman and become metamorphosed. Already she no longer is at

all like the artless girl, the sensitive child, to whom I did not know what to say, and whose sudden questions disconcerted me!

She is coquettish, and there is seduction in her attitudes, in her gestures, in her laugh, and in her touch. One might think that she was trying her power over me, and that she guesses that I no longer have any will of my own. She does with me whatever she likes, and I am quite incapable of resisting the beautiful charm that emanates from her. I feel carried away by her caressing hands, and so happy that I am at times frightened at the excess of my own felicity.

My life now passes amid the most delicious of punishments. Those afternoons and evenings that we spend together, those unconstrained moments when, sitting on the sofa together, she rests her head on my shoulder, holds my hands, and half shuts her beautiful eyes while we settle what our future life shall be,—when I cover her with kisses and inhale the odor of all those little silky locks that form a halo round her imperial brow,—excite me, unsettle me, kill me. And yet I feel inclined to shed tears when the time comes for us to part, and I really only exist when I am with Elaine.

I can scarcely sleep. I see her rise up in the darkness, delicate, fair, and pink, so supple, so elegant with her small waist and tiny hands and feet, with that graceful head and that look of mockery and of coaxing which lies in her smile, that dawn-like brightness which illumes her brow, that when I think that she is going to become my wife, I feel inclined to sing, and to shout amorous folly into the silence of the night.

Elaine also seems to be at the end of her strength. She has grown languid and nervous; she would like to wipe out the fortnight that we still have to wait, and so little does she hide her longing, that one of her uncles, Colonel d'Orthez, said after dinner the other evening: "By Jove, my children, one would take you for two soldiers who are looking forward to their furlough!"

III.

I do not know how I feel, or whence those fears come which have so suddenly assailed me, and taken possession of my whole being like a flight of poisoned arrows. The nearer the day approaches that I am so ardently longing for, on which Elaine will take my name and belong to me, the more anxious, nervous, and tormented by the uncertainty of the morrow I feel.

I love, and I am passionately loved, and few couples start on the unknown journey of a totally new life and enter into matrimony with such hopes, and such an assurance of happiness, as we two.

I have such faith in the girl I am going to marry, and have made her such vows of love, that I should certainly kill myself without a moment's hesitation if anything were to happen to separate us, or to force us to a dignified but irremediable rupture, or if Elaine were seized by some fatal illness. And yet I hesitate, I am afraid, for I know that many others have made shipwreck, have lost their love on the way, have disenchanted their wives and have themselves been

disenchanted in those first ecstasies of possession, during that first night of tenderness and of intimacy.

What does Elaine expect in her vague innocence, which has been lessened by the half confidence of married friends, by semi-avowals, by all the kisses of this sort of apprenticeship which is a court of love; what does she expect, what does she hope for? Will her refined, delicate, vibrating nature bend to the painful submission of the initial embrace; will she not rebel against that ardent attack that wounds and pains? Oh! to have to say to oneself that it must come to that, to lower the most ideal of affections, to think that one is risking one's whole future happiness at such a hazardous game, that the merest trifle might make a woman completely ridiculous or hopeful, and cause an idolized woman to laugh or cry!

I do not know a more desirable, a prettier, or a more attractive being in the whole world than Elaine. I am worn out by feverish love, I thirst for her lips and I wish every particle of her being to belong to me. I love her ardently, but I would willingly give half that I possess to have got through this ordeal, to be a week older, *and still happy!*

IV.

My mother-in-law took me aside yesterday, while they were dancing, and with tears in her eyes said in a tremulous voice:

"You are going to possess the most precious object that we own, and the one we love best. I beg

you to always spare the slightest unhappiness, and to be kind and gentle toward her. I count on your uprightness and affection to guide her and protect her in this dangerous life in Paris." And then, giving way to her feelings more and more, she added: "I do not think that you suppose that I have tried to instruct her in her new duties or to disturb her charming innocence, which has been my work; when two persons worship each other like you two do, a girl learns what she is ignorant of, so quickly and so well!"

I very nearly burst out laughing in her face, for such a theatrical phrase appeared to me both ridiculous and doubtful. So that respectable woman had always been a passive, pliable, inert object, who never had one moment of vibration, of tender emotion in her husband's arms; and I understood why, as I waited at the club, he escaped as soon as possible and made other connections which cost him dear, but in which he found at least some appearance of love.

Oh! to call that supreme bliss of possession a duty, a bliss which makes human beings divine, which transports them far from everything, to term a duty that despotic pain of virginity, which guesses, which waits, which longs for those mysterious, unknown, brief sufferings that contain the germs of future pleasure, the only happiness of which one never tires.

And that piece of advice, at the last moment, which was commonplace and natural, and which I ought to have expected, enervated me and, in spite of myself, plunged me into a state of perplexity from

which I could not extricate myself. I remembered those absurd stories which we hear among friends, after a good dinner. What would be that last trial of our love for her and for me, and could that love which then was my whole life come out of the ordeal lessened or increased tenfold? And when I looked at the couch on which Elaine, my adored Elaine, was sitting, with her head half hidden behind the feathers of her fan, she whispered in a rather vexed voice:

"How cross you look, my dear Jacques! Is the fact of your getting married the cause of it? And you have such a mocking look on your face. If the thought of it terrifies you too much, there is still time to say *no!*"

And delighted, bewitched by her caressing looks, I said in a low voice, almost into her small ear:

"I adore you; and these last moments that still separate us from each other seem centuries to me, my dear Elaine!"

V.

There were tiresome ceremonies yesterday and to-day, which I went through almost mechanically.

First, there is the *yes* before the mayor at the civil ceremony,* like some everyday response in church, which you are in a hurry to get over. It has almost the suggestion of an imperious law, to which you are bound to submit—of a state of bondage,

* Civil marriages are obligatory in France, though usually followed by the religious rite.

which will, perhaps, be very irksome, since the whole of existence is made up of chances.

And then the service in church, with the decorated altar, the voices of the choir, the solemn music of the organ, the unctuous address of the old priest, who marks his periods and seems quite proud of having prepared Elaine for confirmation, and then the procession to the vestry, the shaking of hands, and the greetings of people whom you scarcely see, and whom you do or do not recognize.

Under the long tulle veil, which almost covered her, with the symbolical orange flowers on her bright, light hair, in her white dress, with her downcast eyes and her graceful figure, Elaine looked to me like a Psyche, whose innocent heart was vowed to love. I felt how vain and artificial all this ceremony was, how little this show counted before *the kiss*, the triumphant, revealing, maddening *kiss*, which rivets the flesh of the wife to the lips and the flesh of the husband, which turns the immaculate youth of the virgin into a woman, and consecrates it to tender caresses, to dreams, and to future ecstasies.

VI.

Elaine loves me as much as I adore her.

She left her parental abode as if she were going to some festivity, without turning round toward all that she had left behind her in the way of affection and recollection, and without even that farewell tear, which the first kiss effaces, on her long turned-up lashes.

She looked like a bird which has escaped from its cage, and does not know where to settle, which beats its wings in the intoxication of the light and warbles incessantly. She repeated her words as if she were rather intoxicated, and her laugh sounded like the cooing of a pigeon. Looking into my eyes, with her eyes full of languor, and her arms round my neck like a bracelet, and with her burning cheek against mine, she suddenly exclaimed:

"My darling, would you not give ten years of your life to have already got to the end of the journey?"

The passionate question so disconcerted me that I did not know what to reply; my brain reeled as if I had been at the edge of a precipice. Did she already know what her mother had not told her? Had she already learned what she ought to have been ignorant of? And had that heart, which I used to compare to "the Vessel of Election," of which the litanies of Our Lady speak, already been damaged?

O white veils that hide the blushes, the half-closed eyes, and the trembling lips of some Psyche! O little hands which you raise in an attitude of prayer toward the lighted and decorated altar! O innocent and charming questions, which delighted me to the depths of my being, and which seemed to me to be an absolute promise of happiness, are you, were you nothing but a lie, and a wonderfully well acted piece of trickery?

But was I not wrong, and an idiot, to allow such thoughts to take possession of me, to poison that deep, absorbing love which was now my only law and my only object, by odious and foolish suggestions? What an abject and miserable nature I must

have, for such a simple, affectionate, natural question to disturb me so, when I ought immediately to have replied to Elaine's question, with all the heart that belonged to her:

"Yes, ten or twenty years, because you are my happiness, my desire, my love!"

VII.

I did not choose to wait until she woke up. I sprang from the bed where Elaine was still sleeping, with her disheveled hair lying on the lace-edged pillows. Her complexion was almost transparent, her lips were half open, as if she were dreaming, and she seemed so overcome with sleep, that I felt much emotion when I looked at her.

I drank four glasses of diluted champagne, one after the other, as quickly as I could, but it did not quench my thirst. I was feverish and would have given anything in the world for something to interest me suddenly, to absorb me and lift me out of that slough in which my heart and my brain were being engulfed, as if in a quicksand. I did not venture to avow to myself what was making me so dejected, what was torturing me and driving me mad with grief, or to scrutinize the muddy bottom of my present thoughts sincerely and courageously, to question myself and to pull myself together.

It would have been so odious, so infamous, to harbor such suspicions unjustly, to accuse that adorable creature who was not yet twenty, whom I loved,

and *who seemed to love me,* without having certain proofs, that I felt that I was blushing at the idea that I had any doubt of her innocence. Ah! Why did I marry?

I had a sufficient income to enable me to live as I liked, to pay beautiful women whom I chanced to meet and who pleased me, amused me, and sometimes gave me unexpected proofs of affection, but I had never allowed myself to be caught altogether. In order to keep my heart warm, I had some romantic and sentimental friendships with women in society, some of those delightful flirtations which have an appearance of love, which fill up the idleness of a useless life with a number of unexpected sensations, with small duties, and vague subtle pleasures!

And was I now to be like one of those ships which an unskillful turn of the helm runs ashore as it is leaving the harbor? What terrible trials were awaiting me, what sorrows and what struggles?

A friend said jestingly to me one night at the club, when I had just broken the bank, a thing which forms an epoch in a player's life:

"If I were in your place, Jacques, I should distrust such runs of luck as that, for one always has to pay for them sooner or later!"

Sooner or later!

I half opened the bedroom door gently. Elaine was in one of those heavy sleeps that follow intoxication. Who could tell whether, when she opened her eyes and called me, surprised at not finding herself in my arms, her whole being would not become languid, and suddenly sink into a state of prostration? I wanted to reason with myself, and to bring

myself face to face with those cursed suggestions, as one does with a skittish horse before some object that frightens it—to evoke the recollection of every hour, every minute of that first night of love, and to extract the secret from her.

Elaine's looks and radiant smile were overflowing with happiness, and she had the air of a conqueror who is proud of his triumph, for she was now a *woman* already, and we had *at last been alone* in this modernized country house, which had been redecorated and smartened up to serve as the frame for our affection! She hardly seemed to know what she was saying or doing, and ran from room to room in her light morning dress of mauve crape, without exactly knowing where to sit, and almost dazzled by the light of the lamps that had large shades in the shape of rose leaves over them.

There was no embarrassment, no hesitation, no shamefaced looks, no recoiling from the arms that were stretched out to her, or from the lips that begged; none of those delightful little pieces of awkwardness—which show a virgin soul free from all perversion—in her manner of sitting on my knees, of putting her bare arms round my neck, and of offering me the back of her neck and her lips to kiss. But she laughed nervously, and her supple form trembled when I kissed her passionately on various places, and she said things to me that were suitable for being whispered on the pillows, while a strange languor overshadowed her eyes, and dilated her nostrils.

And suddenly, with a mocking gesture which seemed to bid defiance to a supper that was laid on

a small table, cold meat of various kinds, plates of fruit and of cakes, and an ice-pail, from which the neck of a bottle of champagne protruded, she said merrily:

"I am not at all hungry, dear; let us have supper later; what do you say?"

She half turned round to the large bed, which seemed to be quite ready for us, in the shadow of the recess in which it stood, with its two white, untouched, almost solemn pillows. She was not smiling any more; there was a bluish gleam in her eyes, like that of burning alcohol, and I lost my head. Elaine did not try to escape, and did not utter a complaint.

Oh! that night of torture and delight, that night which ought never to have ended!

I determined that I would be as patient as a policeman who is trying to discover the traces of a crime, that I would investigate the past of this girl, about which I knew nothing. I should be sure to discover some proof, some important reminiscence, some servant who had been her accomplice.

And yet I adored her, my pretty, my divine Elaine, and I would consent to any and everything if only she were what I dreamed, what I wished her to be, if only this nightmare would go and no longer rise up between her and me.

When she woke up, she spoke to me in her coaxing voice. Oh! her kisses, again her kisses, always her kisses, in spite of everything!

Oh! to have believed blindly, to have believed on my knees that she was not lying, that she was not making a mockery of my tenderness, and that she had never belonged, and never would belong, to any one but me!

VIII.

I wished that I could have transformed myself into one of those crafty, unctuous priests, to whom women confess their most secret faults, to whom they intrust their souls and of whom they frequently ask advice—that Elaine could have come and knelt at the grating of my confessional, where I could press her closely with questions, and gradually extract sincere confidences from her.

As soon as I am by the side of a young or old woman now, I try to give our conversation a ticklish turn. I forget all reserve and I try to make her talk of those jokes which nettle, those words of double meaning which excite, and to lead her up to the only subject that interests and holds me—to find out what she feels in her body as well as in her heart, on that night, when for the first time she has to undergo the nuptial ordeal. Some do not appear to understand me, blush, and leave me as if I were some unpleasant, ill-mannered person and had offended them, or as if I had tried to force open the precious casket in which they keep their sweetest recollections.

Some, on the other hand, understand me only too well, scent something equivocal and ridiculous, though they do not exactly know what, make me go on, and finally get out of the difficulty by some subtle piece of impertinence and a burst of chaffing laughter.

Two or three at most, and these were some of those pretty little upstarts who talk at random, and

brag about their vices, and whom one could soon squelch, were one to take the trouble, have related their impressions to me with ironical complaisance, and I found nothing in what they said that reassured me, nor could I discover anything serious, true, or moving in it.

That supreme initiation amused them as much as if it had been a scene from a comedy; the small amount of affection that they felt for the man with whom their existence had been associated grew less and evaporated altogether. They remembered nothing about it except its ridiculous and hateful side, and described it as a sort of pantomime in which they played a bad part. But these did not love and were not adored like Elaine was. They had married either from interest, or that they might not remain old maids—that they might have more liberty and escape from troublesome guardianship.

Foolish dolls, without either heart or head, they had neither that nervous intensity, nor that need for affection, nor that instinct for love which I had discovered in my wife's nature, and which attracted me at the same time that it terrified me.

Besides, who could convince me of my errors, who could dissipate that darkness in which I was lost, what miracle could restore *all* my belief in her again?

IX.

Elaine felt that I was hiding something from her, that I was not happy. She felt that some threat-

ening obstacle had risen up between us, and that some insupportable suspicion was oppressing me, torturing me, keeping me from her arms, poisoning and disturbing that affection in which I had hoped to find fresh youth, absolute happiness, my dream of dreams.

She never spoke to me about it, however, but seemed to recoil from a definite explanation, which might make shipwreck of her love. She surrounded me with endearing attentions, and appeared to be trying to make my life so pleasant to me that nothing in the world could draw me from it. And she would certainly cure me, if this madness of mine were not, alas! like those wounds which are constantly reopening, and which no balm can heal.

But, at times, I lived again, imagining that her caresses had exorcised me, that I was saved, that doubt was no longer gnawing at my heart, that I was going to adore her again, like I used to adore her. I used to throw myself at her knees and put my lips on her little hands which she abandoned to me, would look at her lovely, limpid eyes—like a piece of a blue sky amid black storm clouds—and whisper, with something like a sob in my throat:

"You love me, do you not, with all your heart, you love me as much as I love you; tell me so again, my dear love; tell me that, and nothing but that!"

And she used to reply eagerly, with a smile of joy on her lips:

"Do you not know it? Do you not see every moment that I love you, that you have taken entire possession of me, and that I only live for you and by you!"

And her kisses would give me new life, and intoxicate me, as when one returns from a long and perilous journey in which one has despaired of ever seeing some loved woman again, and meeting with a frenzied embrace, forgets everything in the divine feeling that one is going to die of happiness.

X.

But these clear spots in our sky were only ephemeral, and the cries which accompanied them only grew more bitter and terrible. I knew that Elaine was growing more and more uneasy at the apparent strangeness of my character, that she suffered from it and that it affected her nerves; that the existence to which I was condemning her in spite of myself—all this immoderate love of mine, followed by fits of inexplicable coldness and of low spirits—disconcerted her, so that she was no longer the same, and kept away from me. She could not hide her grief, and was continually worrying me with questions of affectionate pity. She repeated the same things over and over again, with hateful persistence. Had she vexed me, without knowing it? Was I already tired of my married life, and did I regret my lost liberty? Had I any private troubles which I had not told her of; heavy debts which I did not know how to pay; was it family matters or some former connection with a woman that I had broken off suddenly, and that now threatened to create a scandal? Was I being worried by anonymous letters? What was it, in a word; what was it?

My denials only exasperated her, so that she sulked in silence, while her brain worked and her heart grew hard toward me; but could I, as a matter of fact, tell her of the suspicions which were filling my life with gloom and annihilating me? Would it not be odious and vile to accuse her of such a fall, without any proofs or any clew, and would she ever forget such an insult?

I almost envied those unfortunate wretches who had the right to be jealous, who had to fight against a woman's coquetry and light behavior, and who had to defend their honor against some poacher on the preserves of love. They had a target to aim at; they knew their enemies and knew what they were doing, while I was wandering in a land of terrible mirages, was struggling in the midst of vague suppositions, was causing my own troubles and was enraged with her past, which was, I felt sure, as white and pure as any bridal veil.

Ah! It would be better to blow my brains out, I thought to myself, than to prolong such a situation! I had had enough of it. I scarcely lived, and I wished to know all that Elaine had done before we became engaged. I wanted to know whether I was the first or the second, and I determined to know it, even if I had to sacrifice years of my life in inquiry, to lower myself to compromising words and acts, to every species of artifice and to spend everything that I possessed!

She might believe whatever she liked, for after all I should only laugh at it. We might have been so happy; so many envied me, and would gladly have consented to take my place!

XI.

I no longer knew where I was going, but was like a train speeding through a dense fog, disturbing the perfect silence of the sleeping country with puffing and shrill whistles, but all in vain, since the driver cannot distinguish the changing lights of the disks or the signals. Then comes the terrible crash, sending the train off the rails, and piling the carriages into a heap of ruins.

I was afraid of going mad. At times I asked myself whether any of my family had shown signs of mental aberration, and had been locked up in a lunatic asylum — whether the life of constant pleasures that I had led for years, turning night into day and indulging in frequent violent emotions, had not at last affected my brain. If I had believed in anything, or in the science of the occult, which haunts so many restless brains, I should have imagined that some enemy was bewitching me and laying invisible snares for me, suggesting actions quite unworthy of the frank, upright, and well-bred man that I was, and trying to destroy the happiness of which Elaine and I had dreamed.

For a whole week I devoted myself to the hateful business of playing the spy and to the inquiries that were killing me. I had succeeded in discovering the lady's maid who had been in Elaine's service before we were married, a maid whom she loved as a foster sister, who used to accompany Elaine whenever she visited the poor or went for a walk, and used to wake her every morning to do her hair and

dress her. She was young, rather pretty, and polished, for Paris had improved her and she knew her difficult business from end to end.

I found out, however, that her virtue was only apparent, especially since she had left Elaine; that she was fond of going to public balls, and that she divided her favors between a man who came from her part of the country, a sergeant in a dragoon regiment, and a footman, and that she spent all her money on horse races and on dress. I felt sure that I should be able to make her talk and get the truth out of her, either by money or cunning; so I asked her to meet me early one morning in a quiet square.

At first she listened to me in astonishment, without replying yes or no, as if she did not understand what I was aiming at, or with what object I was asking her all these questions about her former mistress. But when I offered her a few hundred francs to loosen her tongue — I was impatient to get the matter over — and pretended to know that she had managed interviews for Elaine with lovers, that they were known and being followed, that Elaine had been in the habit of frequenting quiet bachelors' quarters, from which she returned late, the sly little wench frowned angrily, shrugged her shoulders, and exclaimed:

"What pigs some men are to have such ideas, and cause such an excellent person as Mademoiselle Elaine any unhappiness. Look here, you disgust me with your bank-notes and your dirty insinuations, and I don't choose to say what you deserve!"

Then she turned her back on me and hurried off, but her insolence, and that indignant reply she had

given me, rejoiced me to the depths of my heart, like soothing balm that lulls pain.

I should have liked to have called her back and told her that it was all a joke, that I was devotedly in love with my wife, that I was always on the watch to hear her praised, but she was already out of sight. I felt that I was ridiculous and mean, that I had lowered myself by what I had done, and I swore that I would profit by such a humiliating lesson, and for the future show myself to Elaine as the trusting and ardent husband that she deserved. I thought myself cured, altogether cured.

And yet, I again became a prey to the same bad thoughts, to the same doubts, and persuaded that the girl had lied to me,—just like all women lie when they are on the defensive,—that she had made fun of me, that perhaps *some one* had foreseen this scene and had told her what to say and made sure of her silence, having paid for her complicity. Shall I always knock up against some obstacle, always struggle in this wretched darkness, this mire from which I cannot extricate myself!

XII.

Nobody knew anything. Neither the Superior of the Convent where she had been brought up until she was sixteen, nor the servants who had waited on her, nor the governesses who had finished her education, could remember that Elaine had been difficult to govern or to teach, or that she had had any other ideas than those of her age. She had certainly shown

no precocious coquetry or disquieting instincts; she had had no equivocal cousinly intimacies, when if the bridle is relaxed, and one of them has learned at school what love is, the two big children yield to the fatal law of sex, and begin the inevitable eclogue of "Daphnis and Chloe" over again.

However—oh! I felt it too much for it to be nothing but a chimera and a mirage—it was no *virgin* who threw her arms round my neck so lovingly, who returned my first kisses so *deliciously*, who was attracted by my society, who gave no signs of surprise and uttered no complaint, who appeared to forget everything when in my society. No, no, a thousand times no, that could not have been a pure woman.

I should have cast off the intoxication which was bewitching me, and have rushed out of the room where such a lie was being consummated. I ought to have profited by her moments of loving weakness, when she was incapable of collecting her thoughts, and would with tears have confessed an old fault, for which she had not, perhaps, been altogether responsible. Perhaps by my entreaties, or perhaps even by violence, from terror at my furious looks, when my features would have been distorted by rage, and my hands clenched in spite of myself in a gesture of menace and of murder, I might have forced her to open her heart, to show me its defilement, and to tell me her sad love episode.

How do I know whether her color might not have moved me to pity, whether I should not have wept with her at the heavy cross that we both had to bear, whether I should not have forgiven her and

opened my arms wide, so that she might have thrown herself into them as into a peaceful refuge?

Would not any man-about-town, or vicious student on the lookout for innocent girls, have perceived her nervousness, her vice? Would he not have hypnotized her, as it were, by amorous touches, by skillful caresses and reduced her to the absolute passiveness of an animal taken unawares, without any care for the morrow, or what the consequences of such a fault might be?

Or was I completely her dupe and the dupe of a villain? Had she loved, and did she still love, the man who had first possessed her—who had been her first lover? Who could tell me, or come to my aid? Who could give me proof, real, undeniable proof, either that I was an infamous wretch to suspect Elaine, whom I ought to have worshiped with my eyes shut, or that she was guilty, that she had lied, and that I had the right to cast her out of my life and to treat her as a worthless woman!

XIII.

If I had married when young, before wallowing in the mire of Paris, from which you can never cleanse yourself, for heart and body both retain its indelible marks, if I had not been the plaything of a score of mistresses, who disgusted me with belief in any woman, if I had not been weaned from supreme illusions and surfeited with low materialism, should I now have these abominable ideas?

I waited almost until the decline of life before I took the right course and sought refuge in port; before I sought what is pure and virtuous, and heeded the continual advice of those who loved me. I passed too suddenly from the lies, from the ephemeral enjoyments, from the satiety which depraves us, from the vice in which one tries to acquire renewed strength and vigor and to discover some new and unknown sensation, to the pure sentimentalities of an engagement, to the unspeakable delights of a life common to two, to that delicious first and lasting communion which ought to constitute married life.

I had been afraid that somebody else would be beforehand with me and rob me of Elaine's heart, had been fearful of relapsing into my former habits. But if I had possessed moral strength and character enough, in case I had to wait, or even if I had backed out without entering into any engagement and without binding my life to that of the adorable girl whom chance had thrown in my way, it would have been far better. I could have waited, prepared myself, questioned myself, and accustomed myself to that metamorphosis; could have purified myself and forgotten the past in those retreats which precede the solemn ceremony, when pious souls pronounce indissoluble vows.

The reaction had been too sudden and violent for such a convalescent as I. I had worked myself up, and pictured to myself something so white, so virginal, so paradisic, such complete ignorance, such unconquerable modesty and such delicious awkwardness, that Elaine's gaiety, her unconstraint, her fearlessness,

and her passionate kisses bewildered me, rousing my suspicions and filling me with anguish.

And yet I know how all, or nearly all, girls are educated in these days, and that the ignorant and simple ones only exist on the stage. I know also that they hear and learn too many things both at home and in society, not to have an intuitive knowledge of the results of love.

Elaine loves me with all her heart, for she has told me so time after time, and she repeats it to me more ardently than ever when I take her into my arms and seem happy. She must have seen that her beauty had, in a manner, converted me; that in order to possess her I had renounced many seductions and a long life of enjoyment; and that, perhaps, she would no longer please me if she were *too much of the little girl*—that she would appear ridiculous to me if she showed her fears by any entreaty, any gesture, or any sigh.

As people in the South say, she would have acted as a brave woman, and boasted, so that no complaint might betray her, would have imparted the wild tenderness of a jealous heart to her kisses, and have attempted a struggle, which would certainly have been useless, against those recollections of mine with which she thought I must be filled, in spite of myself.

I accused myself, so that I might no longer accuse her. I studied my malady; I knew quite well that I was wrong, and indeed I wished to be wrong. I measured the stupidity and the disgrace of such suspicions, but, nevertheless, in spite of everything, they assailed me again, watched me like a spy, and carried me away and consumed me.

Ah! Is there in the whole world, even among the most wretched beggars that are dying of starvation, whom nature crushes in a vise, as it were, or among the victims of misplaced love, anybody who can say that he is more wretched than I?

XIV.

This morning Count de Saulnac, who was lunching here, told us a terrible story of a rape, for which a man is to be tried in a few days.

A charming girl of eighteen grew languid, became so pale and morose, cheeks so wax-like, her eyes so sunken and altogether so anæmic, that her parents grew uneasy and took her to a doctor who lived near them. He examined her carefully, talked vaguely of what was the matter with her, said it was an illness that required assiduous care and attention, and advised the worthy couple to bring the poor girl to him every day for a month.

As they were not well enough off to keep a servant, and each had their work to attend to, the husband as an employee in a public office and his wife as cashier in a milliner's shop, and did not dream of any evil, being further reassured by the charitable, unctuous looks of the doctor, they allowed their daughter to go and consult him by herself.

The old man made much of her, tried to make her get over her shyness, adroitly made her tell him all about her usual life, took a long time in sounding her chest, helped her to dress and undress, in a

very paternal way, gave her a potion and was so thoughtful and caressing that the poor girl blushed and felt quite uncomfortable at it all. He soon saw that he could obtain nothing from her innocence, and that she would resist his slightest attempts at improper familiarity. As he was extremely taken with the delicate and attractive girl, and with her charming person, the wretch sent her to sleep with a few magnetic passes, and outraged her.

She awoke without being conscious of what had happened, only feeling rather more listless than usual, as she did when there was thunder in the air. From that time the doctor put longer intervals between her visits, and soon, after having prescribed insignificant remedies for her, he told her that she was cured, and that she need not come and see him any more. Two months passed, and the girl, who at first had seemed much better and more lively, relapsed into the state of prostration which had so alarmed them, dragged herself about more than walked, and seemed to be sinking under some heavy burden.

As they had not paid the old doctor's bill, and as they were afraid that he would ask them for it if they went to see him again, her father took the girl to Beaujon. He nearly went mad with despair and shame when one of the house-surgeons, without mincing his words, told them in a jesting manner that she was *enceinte.*

Enceinte! What did he mean by that? And by whom?

They were small, thoroughly respectable and upright wage-earners, and this made them heartless. They tormented the poor girl to make her acknowl-

edge her fault and tell them the name of her seducer. It was no use for her to moan, to throw herself at their feet, to tear her hair in desperation, and to swear that no man in the world had even touched her lips. In vain did she exclaim indignantly that it was impossible that such a dreadful thing could be; that the man had made a mistake or was joking with them. In vain did she try to calm them, and to soften them by her entreaties; they turned away, and had only one reply to make:

"His name, his name!"

When she saw that her figure was altering, she was at length convinced, she behaved like an imprisoned animal, did not speak, cowered motionless in the darkest corners, and did not even rebel at the blows which marked her pale, passive face. She carefully thought over every minute in the past few months, and did her utmost to fill up the voids in her memory, and at last she guessed who the guilty person was.

Then, in despair, she scribbled on a scrap of paper:

"I swear to you, my dear parents, that I have nothing to reproach myself with. The old doctor treated me so strangely, that I often felt inclined to run out of the consulting-room. One day he put me to sleep, and perhaps it was he who—"

And not having the courage to finish the lamentable sentence, she went out and drowned herself. The parents had the doctor, who had forgotten all about it, arrested, and in his examination he confessed the crime.

With an evil look on her face, such as I had

never seen before, and with vibrating nostrils, Elaine exclaimed in a hard voice:

"To think that such a monster was not sent to the guillotine!"

Can she also have suffered the same thing?

XV.

But unless Elaine was a monster of wickedness, unless she had no heart, and knew how to lie and to deceive as well as a girl whose only pleasure consists in making all those who are captivated by her play the laughable part of dupes,—unless that mask of youth concealed a most polluted soul,—if there had been any unhappy episode in her life, if she had endured the horrors of violation, and gone through all the misery of desolation, fear, and shame, would not something visible, something intelligible, attacks of low spirits, of gloom, and of disgust with everything have remained, to show the progress of some mysterious malady, a gradual weakening of the brain and the enlargement of an incurable wound?

She would have cried occasionally, would have been absent-minded, confused when spoken to. She would scarcely have taken any interest in anything that happened, either at home or elsewhere. Kisses would have become a torture to her, and would have only excited a fever of revolt in her inanimate being.

I fancy that I can see such a victim of inexorable Destiny, a mentally consumptive woman whose days are numbered, and who knows it. She smiles feebly

when anyone tries to get her out of her torpor, to amuse her and to instill a little hope into her soul. Such a victim does not speak, but remains sitting silently at a window for whole days together, making one think that her large, dreamy eyes are looking at strange sights in the depths of the sky, and see a long, attractive highway there. But Elaine, on the contrary, thought of nothing but of amusing herself, of enjoying life and of laughing, adding all the tricks of a girl who has just left school to the seductive grace of a young woman. She carried men away; she was most seductive, and loving seemed to be her life. She thought of nothing but of little coquettish acts that made her more adorable, and of those tender innuendoes that triumph over everything, that bring men to their knees and captivate them.

It was thus that I formerly dreamed of the woman who was to be my wife, and this was the manner in which I looked on married life. Now this perpetual joy irritates me like a challenge, like some piece of insolent boasting, and the lips that seek mine, and offer themselves so alluringly and coaxingly to me, sadden and torture me as if they breathed nothing but a Lie.

Ah! If she had been the lover of another man before marriage, if she had belonged to some one else besides me, it could only have been from love, without altogether knowing what she wanted or what she was doing! And, now, because she had acquired a name by marriage, because she had accidentally extricated herself from that misadventure and had won the game, she fancied that I had not perceived anything, that I adored her and was hers absolutely.

How wretched I was! Should I never be able to escape from that night which was growing darker and darker, which was imprisoning me, driving me mad, and raising an increasing and impenetrable barrier between Elaine and me? Would she not, in the end, be the stronger—she whom I loved so dearly? Would not she enfold me in so much love, that at last I should again find my lost happiness as in a calm, sunlit haven? Should I not forget this horrible nightmare when I fell on my knees before her beauty, with a contrite heart and pricked by remorse, happy to give myself to her forever, altogether and more passionately than at the divine period of our betrothal?

XVI.

Even the sight of our bedroom became painful to me. I was frightened of it; I was uncomfortable there, and felt a kind of repulsion in going there. It seemed to me as if Elaine were repeating a part that some one else had taught her, and I almost hoped that in a moment of forgetfulness she would allow her secret to escape her, and pronounce some name that was not mine. I used to lie awake, with my ears on the alert, in the hope that she might betray herself in her sleep and murmur some revealing word that recalled the past, and my temples would throb and my whole body tremble with excitement.

But when this was over and I saw her sleeping as peacefully as a little girl tired with playing, with

parted lips and disheveled hair, and measured the full extent of the stupidity of my hatred and of the sacrilegious madness of my jealousy, my heart would soften and I would fall into such a state of profound and absolute distress that I might have died of it. Large drops of cold perspiration would course down my cheeks and tears fall from my eyes, and I would get up, so that my sobs might not disturb her rest and wake her.

As this could not continue, however, I told her one day that I felt so exhausted and ill that I should prefer to sleep in my own room. She appeared to believe me, and merely said:

"As you please, my dear!" but her blue eyes suddenly assumed such an anxious, such a grieved look, that I turned my head aside so as not to see them.

XVII.

I was again in the old house—*and without her*—in the old house where Elaine used to spend all her holidays, in that room where the shutters had not been opened since our departure, seven months ago.

Why did I go where the calm of the country, the solitude, and my recollections irritated me and recalled my trouble—where I suffered even more than I did in Paris, and where I thought of Elaine every moment, seeming to see and hear her in a species of hallucination?

What did her letters that I had taken out of the writing table that she had used as a girl, what did

the ball cards which were stuck round the looking-glass in which she used to admire herself formerly, what did her dresses, her dressing gowns, and the dusty furniture whose repose my trembling hands violated tell me? Nothing, and always nothing!

At table, I used to speak with the worthy couple, who had never left the mansion and appeared to look upon themselves as its second masters, with the apparent good nature of a man who was in love with his wife—who wished to speak about her alone, who took an interest in the smallest detail of her childhood and youth. With the jovial familiarity with which peasants talk when a few glasses of white wine have loosened their tongues, they would talk about the girl whom they loved as if she had been their child. At other times I used to question the farmers when they came to settle their accounts.

Had Elaine been restrained like so many girls were; did she like the country, were the peasants fond of her, and had she shown any preference for one or the other? Were many people invited for the shooting, and had she visited much with the other ladies in the neighborhood?

They drank, with their elbows resting on the table in front of me, uttered her praises in voices as monotonous as a spinning wheel, lost themselves in endless, senseless chatter which made me yawn in spite of myself, telling me her girlish tricks, which certainly did not disclose what I wanted, the traces of that first love, that perilous flirtation, that foolish escapade in which Elaine might have been seduced.

Men and women, old and young, spoke of her with something like devotion. All said how kind and

charitable she was, merry as a bird on a bright day; they recalled how she pitied their wretchedness and their troubles, and was still a young girl in spite of her long dresses, fearing nothing, and how even the animals loved her.

She was almost always alone, and was never troubled with any companions; she seemed to shun the house and hide herself in the park when the bell announced some unexpected visit, and when one of her aunts, Madame de Pleissac, said to her one day: "Do you think that you will ever find a husband with your stand-offish manners?" she replied with a burst of laughter: "Oh! Very well, then, auntie, I shall do without one!"

She had never given a handle to gossip or to slander, and had not flirted with the best-looking young men in the neighborhood, any more than she had with the officers who stayed at the château during the maneuvers, or the neighbors who came to see her parents. Some of them, even old men whom years of work had bent like vine-stocks, and had tanned like the leather bottles used by caravans in the East, used to say with tears in their dim eyes:

"Ah! When you married our young lady, we all said that there would not be a happier man in the whole world than you!"

Ought I to have believed them? Were they not simple, frank souls, ignorant of wiles and of lies, who had no interest in deceiving me, who had lived near Elaine while she was growing up to womanhood, and had been familiar with her?

Could I be the only one who doubted Elaine, the only one who accused her and suspected her, I who

loved her so madly, I whose only hope, only desire, only happiness she was? May Heaven guide me in this wilderness in which I have lost my way, where I am calling for help and where my misery is increasing every day, and grant me the infinite pleasure of being able to enjoy her caresses without evil doubts and to be able to love her as she loves me. And if I must expiate my faults, and this infamous doubt which I am ashamed of not being immediately able to cast from me, if I must pay for my unmerited happiness with usury, I hope that I may be given over to death, provided only that I may belong to her, idolize her, believe in her kisses, believe in her beauty and in her love, for one hour, or for even a few moments!

XVIII.

To-day I suddenly remembered a funny evening I once spent as a bachelor, at Madame d'Ecoussens, where all of us, some with secret and insurmountable agony, and others with absolute indifference, went into a small room where a female professor of palmistry, who was then in vogue, and whose name I have forgotten, had installed herself.

When it came my turn to sit opposite to her, as if going to confession, she took my hands into her long, slender fingers, felt them, squeezed them, and massaged them, as if they had been a lump of wax which she was about to model into shape.

Severely dressed in black, neither old nor young, with a pensive face, thin lips, and almost copper-

colored eyes, this woman had something commanding, imperious, disturbing about her, and I must confess that my heart beat more violently then usual when she looked at the lines in my left hand through a strong magnifying glass, where the mysterious characters of some satanic design appear, and form a capital M.

She was very interesting, occasionally discovered fragments of my past and gave mysterious hints, as if her looks were following the strange roads of Destiny in those unequal, confused curves. She told me in brief words that I should have and had had some opportunities, that I was wasting my physical, more than my moral, strength in all kinds of love affairs that did not last long, and that the day I really loved or when, to use her expression, I was fairly caught, would be to me the prelude of intense suffering, a real *via crucis* and the beginning of an illness of which I should never be cured. Then, as she examined my line of life, that which surrounds the thick part of the thumb, the lady in black suddenly grew gloomy, frowned, appeared unwilling to continue my horoscope, and said very quickly:

"Your line of life is magnificent, Monsieur; you will live to be sixty at least, but take care not to spend your energy too freely or to use it immoderately; beware of strong emotions and of any passionate crisis, for I remark a gap there in the full vigor of your age, and that gap, that incurable malady which I mentioned to you, in the line of your heart—"

I mastered myself, in order not to smile, and took my leave of her, but everything that she foretold has

been realized, and I dare not look at that sinister gap which she saw in my line of life--*for that gap can only mean madness!*

Madness, my poor, dear, adored Elaine!

XIX.

I became as bad and spiteful as if the spirit of natred had possession of me. I envied those whose life was too happy, and who had no cares to trouble them. I could not conceal my pleasure when one of those domestic dramas occurred, in which hearts bleed and are broken, in which odious treachery and bitter sufferings are brought to light.

Divorce proceedings with their miserable episodes, with the wranglings of the lawyers and the unhappiness that they revealed, exposing the vanity of dreams, the tricks of women, the lowness of some minds, the foul animal nature that sits and slumbers in most hearts, attracted me like a delightful play, a piece which rivets one from the first to the last act. I listened greedily to passionate letters, those mad prayers whose secrets some lawyer reads aloud in a mocking tone, and gives out to the bench and to the public, who have come to be amused or to be excited, and to stare at the victims of love.

I followed those romances of adultery which were unfolded chapter by chapter, in the brutal reality of things that had actually occurred, and for the first time I forgot my own unhappiness in them. Sometimes the husband and wife were there, as if they

wished to defy each other, to meet in some last encounter, feverishly watching each other, devouring each other with their eyes, hiding their grief and their misery. Sometimes again, the lover or the mistress would be there, would tear their gloves in rage, wishing to defend their love, to bring forward accusations in their turn, tell the advocate that he was lying, threaten and revile him with all the fury raging in them. Friends, however, would restrain them, would whisper something to them in a low voice, press their hands in sympathy, and try to appease them.

It seemed as if I were looking at a heap of ruins, or breathing the odor of an ambulance in which dying men were groaning, and that these unhappy people were assuaging my trouble somewhat by taking a share of it.

I used to read the advertisements in the Agony Columns in the newspapers, where the same exalted phrases used to recur, the same despairing adieux, earnest requests for a meeting, echoes of past affection, and vain vows. All this relieved me, vaguely appeased me, and made me think less about myself—that hateful, incurable *ego* whom I longed to destroy!

XX.

As the heat was very oppressive, and there was not a breath of wind after dinner, Elaine wanted to go for a drive in the Bois de Boulogne. So we drove in the victoria toward the bridge at Suresne.

It was getting late, and the dark drives looked liked deserted labyrinths; cool retreats where one would have liked to have lingered, where the very rustle of the leaves seemed to whisper amorous temptations, where there was seduction in the softness of the air and in the infinite music of the silence.

Occasionally, lights were to be seen among the trees. The crescent of the new moon shone like a half-opened gold bracelet in the quiet sky, and the green sward, the copses, and the small lakes, which gave an uncertain reflection of the surrounding objects, came into sight suddenly, out of the shade, and the intoxicating smell of the hay and of the flower beds rose from the earth as if from a sachet.

We did not speak, but the jolting of the carriage occasionally brought us quite close together, and as if attracted by some irresistible force, I turned to Elaine and saw that her eyes were full of tears, that she was very pale, and my whole body trembled when I looked at her. Suddenly, as if she could not bear the tension any longer, she threw her arms round my neck, and with her lips almost touching mine, she said:

"Why do you not love me any longer? Why do you make me so unhappy? What have I done to you, Jacques?"

She was at my mercy, she was under the charm of one of those moonlight nights which unbrace women's nerves, make them languid, leave them without a will and without any strength, and I thought that she was going to tell me everything and to confess everything to me? I had to steel myself against kissing those sweet coaxing lips, and replied coldly:

"Do you not know, Elaine? Did you not think that sooner or later I should discover everything that you have been trying to hide from me?"

She sat up in terror, repeating as if she were in a daze:

"What have I been trying to hide from you?"

I had said too much, but was bound to go on to the end—to finish, even though I repented of it ever afterward—and amid the noise of the carriage I said in a hoarse voice:

"Is it not your fault if I have become estranged from you, shall not I be the only one to be unhappy, I who loved you so dearly, who believed in you, and whom you have deceived and condemned to take another man's mistress?"

Elaine closed my mouth with my fingers, and panting, with dilated eyes and with such a pale face that I thought she was going to faint, she said hoarsely:

"Be quiet, be quiet, you are frightening me—frightening me as if you were a madman—"

Her words froze me, and I shivered as if some phantoms were appearing among the trees and showing me the place that had been marked out for me by Destiny. I felt inclined to jump from the carriage and to run to the river which was calling to me from yonder in maternal tones, inviting me to an eternal sleep. But Elaine called out to the coachman:

"We will go home, Firmin; drive as fast as you can!"

We did not exchange another word. During the whole drive Elaine sobbed convulsively, though she

tried to hide the sound with her pocket handkerchief, and I understood that it was all finished,—*that I had killed our love.*

XXI.

Yes, all was finished, and stupidly finished, without the decisive explanation, through which I should find strength to escape from a hateful yoke, and to repudiate the woman who had allured me with false caresses, and no longer ought to bear my name.

It was either that, or else—who knows?—the happiness, the peace, the love which was not troubled by any evil after-thoughts, that absolute love that I dreamed of between Elaine and myself when I asked for her hand, and of which I was still continually dreaming with the despair of a condemned soul far from Paradise, from which I was suffering, and which would kill me.

She had prevented me from speaking; with her trembling hand she had checked that flow of frenzied words which were about to come from my pained heart, those terrible accusations which an imperious, resistless force incited me to utter; and the terrified words which escaped from her pale lips froze me again, and penetrated to my marrow like some piercing wind.

In spite of it all, I was in full possession of my reason; I was not in a passion, and I could not have looked like a fool.

What could she have seen unusual in my eyes that frightened her, what inflections were there in

my voice for such an idea suddenly to arise in her brain? Suppose she had not made a mistake, suppose I no longer knew what I was saying nor what I was doing, and really had that terrible malady that she had mentioned, and which I cannot repeat!

It seems now that I can see myself in a mirror of anguish, altogether changed—that my head is a complete void at times. Then it becomes resonant and is struck violent, prolonged blows with a heavy clapper, as if it were a bell. It is filled with tumultuous, deafening vibrations, with loud tocsins, and with monotonous peals succeeded by the silence of the grave.

And the voice of recollection, a voice which tells me Elaine's mysterious history, which speaks to me only of her, which recalls that initial night, that strange night of happiness and of grief, when I doubted her fidelity, when I doubted her heart as well as I did herself, passes slowly through this silence all at once, like the voice of distant music:

"Alas! Suppose she had never fallen!"

XXII.

I must be an object of hatred to her. I left home without writing her a line, without trying to see her, without wishing her good-bye. She may pity me or she may hate me, but she certainly does not love me any longer. I have myself buried that love, for which I would formerly have given my whole life. As she is young and pretty, however, Elaine will soon console herself for these passing troubles with some soul

that is the shadow of her own, and will replace me, if she has not done that already, seeking her happiness in adultery.

What are she and her lover plotting? What will they do to prevent me from interfering with them? What snares will they set for me so that I may end my miserable life in some dungeon, from which there is no release?

But that is impossible, it can never be; Elaine belongs to me altogether and forever, she is my property, my chattel, my happiness. I adore her, I want her all to myself, *even though she be guilty*, and I will never leave her again for a moment. I will still cling to her petticoats, I will roll at her feet, and ask her pardon, for I thirst for her kisses and her love.

To-night in a few hours, I shall be with her, I shall go into *our* room and lie in *our* bed, and I will cover the cheeks of my fair-haired darling with such kisses that she will no longer think me mad. But if she cries out, if she defends herself and spurns me, I shall kill her; I have made up my mind to that.

I feel that I shall kill her with the Arab knife that is on one of the console-tables, in our room, among other knickknacks. I see the spot where I shall plunge the sharp blade, in the nape of her neck, which is covered with little, soft, pale, golden curls, of the same color as the hair of her head. It attracted me so at one time, during the chaste period of our engagement, that I used to wish to bite it, as if it had been a plum. I shall do it some day in the country, just when she is bathed in a ray of sunlight, dazzling in her pink muslin dress—some day on a towing-

path, when the nightingales are singing, and the dragon-flies, in their blue and silver splendor, are flying about.

There, there I shall skillfully plunge it in up to the hilt, like those who know how to kill.

XXIII.

And after I had killed her, what then?

As the judges would not be able to explain such an extraordinary crime to their satisfaction, they would of course say that I was mad. Medical men would examine me, and would immediately agree that I ought at once to be kept under supervision, taken care of, and placed in a lunatic asylum.

And for years, perhaps,—because I was strong, and because such a vigorous animal as I would survive the calamity intact, although intellect might give way,—I should remain a prey to these chimeras, to the fixed idea of her lies, her impurity, and her shame. It would be my one recollection, and I should suffer unceasingly.

I am writing all this perfectly coolly and in full possession of my reason; I have perfect prescience of what my resolve entails, and of this blind rush toward death. I feel that my very minutes are numbered, and that I no longer have anything in my head but fire, except a few particles of what used to be a brain.

Just as a short time ago, I should certainly have murdered Elaine, if she had been with me—when

invisible hands seemed to be pushing me toward her, inaudible voices ordering me to commit that murder —it is most probable that I shall have another crisis, and will there be any awakening from that?

Ah! It will be a thousand times better, since Destiny has left me a half-open door, to escape from life before it is too late, before the free, sane, strong man that I am at present becomes the most pitiable, the most destructive, the most dangerous of human wrecks!

May all these notes of my misery fall into Elaine's hands some day, may she read them to the end, pity and absolve me, and for a long time mourn for me!

(*Here ends Jacques's journal.*)

THE HERMAPHRODITE

"Upon my word, I laughed at it as much as the rest," exclaimed Navarette. "I laughed at it with that profound, cruel pitilessness which all of us who are well made and vigorous feel for those whom Stepmother Nature has disfigured in some way or other—for those laughable, feeble creatures who are more to be pitied than the poor deformed wretches from whom we turn away in spite of ourselves.

"I had been the first to make fun of him at the club, to say those biting words which are remembered, and to ridicule that smooth, flabby, pink, ugly face, like that of an old woman, or of a Levantine eunuch, in which the mouth is like a piece of inert flesh, a face in which the small eyes glisten with concentrated cunning, and remind us of the watchful, angry eyes of a gorilla. I knew that he was selfish, without affection, unreliable, full of whims, turned like a weathercock with every wind

that blows, and cared for nothing in the world except gambling and old Dresden china.

"However, our intercourse was invariably limited to a careless 'Good morning,' and to the usual hand-shake which men exchange when they meet at the theater or the club. So I had neither to defend him, nor to uphold him as a friend. But I can swear to you that now I reproach myself for all those effusive jeers and bitter things, and they weigh on my conscience now that I have been told the other side, the equivocal enigma of that existence."

"A Punch and Judy secret," Bob Shelley said, throwing the end of his cigar into the fire.

"Oh! yes, we were a hundred miles from the truth, when we merely supposed that he was unfit for service. This unhappy Lantosque, a well-born, clever man, and very rich to boot, might have exhibited himself in some traveling booth, for he was an hermaphrodite—do you understand?— an hermaphrodite. And his whole life was one of long, incessant torture, of physical and moral suffering more maddening than that which Tantalus endured on the banks of the river Acheron. He had nearly every mark of the woman about him. He was a ridiculous caricature of our sex, with his shrill voice, his large hips, his bust concealed by a loose, wide coat, his cheeks, his chin, and upper lip without a vestige of hair. He had to appear like a man, to restrain and stifle his instincts, his tastes, desires, and dreams, to fight ceaselessly against himself, and never to allow anything of that which he endured, nor what he longed for, nor that which was sapping his very life, to be discovered.

"Once only was he on the point of betraying himself, in spite of himself. He ardently loved a man, as Chloe must have loved Daphnis. He could not master himself, or calm his feverish passion, and he stumbled toward the abyss as if seized by mental giddiness. He could imagine nothing handsomer, more desirable, or more charming than this chance friend. He had sudden transports, fits of surprise, tenderness, curiosity, jealousy, the ardent longings of an old maid who is afraid of dying a virgin, who is waiting for love as for her deliverance, who attaches and devotes herself to a lover with her whole being, and who grows emaciated and dries up as she remains misunderstood and despised.

"As they have both disappeared now, the loved one dead from a sword thrust in the chest, at Milan, on account of some ballet girl, and as he certainly died without knowing that he had inspired such a passion, I may tell you his name.

"He was Count Sebinico, who used to deal at faro with such delicate, white hands, who wore rings on nearly every finger, had such a musical voice, and with his wavy hair and his delicate profile looked like a handsome Florentine *condottiere.*

"It must be very terrible to be thus ashamed of oneself—to have a longing for those kisses which console the most wretched in their misery, kisses which satisfy hunger and thirst, and assuage pain; for the illusion of delicious, intoxicating kisses, the delight and the balm of which such a person can never know. And then to have the horror of that dishonor of being pointed at, made fun of, driven away like unclean creatures that prostitute their sex, and make

love vile by unmentionable rites! Oh! the constant bitterness of seeing that the person we love makes fun of us, ill-uses us, and does not show us even the slightest friendship!"

"Poor devil!" Jean d'Orthyse said in a sad and moved voice. "In his place, I should have blown my brains out."

"Everybody says that, my dear fellow, but how few there are who venture to forestall that intruder who always comes too quickly.

"Lantosque had splendid health, and declared that he had never put a penny into a doctor's pocket. If he had allowed himself to have been looked after when he was confined to his bed two months before, by an attack of influenza, we should still be hearing him propose, in his shrill voice, a game of poker before dinner. His death, however, was as tragic and mysterious as are all those tales from beyond the grave, tales bound up with the Invisible.

"Although he had a cough which threatened to tear his chest to pieces, and though he was haunted by the fear of death,—of that great depth of darkness in which we lose ourselves in the abyss of Annihilation and Oblivion,—he obstinately refused to have his chest sounded, and repulsed Doctor Pertuzés so furiously, that we thought he had gone out of his mind.

"He would cover himself with the bedclothes up to his chin, find strength enough to tear up the prescriptions, and to drive away everyone, whether friend or relation, who tried to make him listen to reason, not understanding his attacks of rage and neurosis. He seemed to be possessed by some demon, like those hysterical women whom the bishops

used formerly to exorcise with much pomp. It was painful to see him.

"That went on for a week, during which time pneumonia had ample opportunities for ravaging and giving the finishing strokes to his body, hitherto so robust and free from ailments. He died, trying to utter some last words which nobody understood, and endeavoring to point out one particular article of furniture in the room.

"His nearest relative was a cousin, the Marquis de Territet, a sceptic, who lived in Burgundy, whom all this disturbance had upset, and whose only desire was to get it all over—the legal formalities, the funeral, and all the rest of it—as soon as possible.

"Without reflecting on the strange suggestiveness of that deathbed, and without looking to see whether there might not be, somehow or other, a will in which Lantosque expressed his last wishes, he wanted to spare his corpse the contact of mercenary hands, and to lay him out himself.

"You may judge of his surprise when on throwing back the bedclothes, he first of all saw that Lantosque was dressed from head to foot in tights, which accentuated, rather than otherwise, his female form.

"Much alarmed, feeling that he must have been violating some supreme order, and guessing at it all, he went to his cousin's writing-table, opened it, and successively searched every drawer. He soon found an envelope fastened with five seals, and addressed to him. He broke them and read as follows, written on a sheet of black-edged paper:

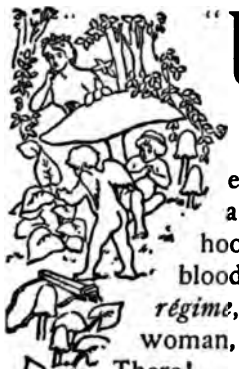
"'This is my only will. I leave all that I possess to my cousin, Roland de Territet, on condition

that he will undertake my funeral; that in his own presence, he will have me wrapped up in the sheets of the bed on which I die, and have me put into the coffin so, without any further preparations. I wish to be cremated at Père-Lachaise, and not to be subjected to any examination, or post-mortem, whatever may happen.'"

"And how came the Marquis to betray the secret?" Bob Shelley asked.

"The Marquis is married to a charming Parisian woman, and was any married man, who loved his wife, ever known to keep a secret from her?"

THE COLONEL'S IDEAS



"UPON my word," said Colonel Laporte, "I am old and gouty, my legs are as stiff as two sticks, and yet if a pretty woman were to tell me to go through the eye of a needle, I believe I should take a jump at it, like a clown through a hoop. I shall die like that; it is in the blood. I am an old beau, one of the old *régime*, and the sight of a woman, a pretty woman, stirs me to the tips of my toes. There!

"And then we are all very much alike in France; we remain cavaliers, cavaliers of love and fortune, since God has been abolished, whose bodyguard we really were. But nobody will ever get the woman out of our hearts; there she is, and there she will remain; we love her, and shall continue to love her, and to commit all kinds of frolics on her account, so long as there is a France on the map of Europe. And even if France were to be wiped off the map, there would always be Frenchmen left.

"When I am in the presence of a woman, of a pretty woman, I feel capable of anything. By Jove, when I feel her looks penetrating me, those confounded looks which set your blood on fire, I could do anything: fight a duel, have a row, smash the furniture, anything just to show that I am the strongest, the bravest, the most daring, and the most devoted of men.

"But I am not the only one—certainly not; the whole French army is like me, that I will swear to. From the common soldier to the general, we all go forward, and to the very end, mark you, when there is a woman in the case, a pretty woman. Remember what Joan of Arc made us do formerly! Come, I'd make a bet that if a pretty woman had taken command of the army on the eve of Sedan, when Marshal MacMahon was wounded, we should have broken through the Prussian lines, by Jove! and have had a drink out of their guns.

"It was not Trochu, but Saint-Geneviève, who was required in Paris, and I remember a little anecdote of the war which proves that we are capable of everything in the presence of a woman.

"I was a captain, a simple captain, at the time, and was in command of a detachment of scouts who were retreating through a district swarming with Prussians. We were surrounded, pursued, tired out, and half dead with fatigue and hunger, and by the next day we had to reach Bar-sur-Tain; otherwise we should be done for, cut off from the main body and killed. I do not know how we managed to escape so far. However, we had ten leagues to go during the night, ten leagues through the snow, and upon empty stomachs. I thought to myself:

"'It is all over; my poor fellows will never be able to do it.'

"We had eaten nothing since the day before, and the whole day long we remained hidden in a barn, huddled close together, so as not to feel the cold so much; we did not venture to speak or even move, and we slept by fits and starts, like you sleep when you are worn out with fatigue.

"It was dark by five o'clock, that wan darkness caused by the snow, and I shook up my men. Some of them would not get up; they were almost incapable of moving or of standing upright, and their joints were stiff from the cold and want of motion.

"In front of us there was a large expanse of flat, bare country; the snow was still falling like a curtain, in large, white flakes, which concealed everything under a heavy, thick, frozen mantle, a mattress of ice. You would have thought that it was the end of things.

"'Come, my lads, let us start.'

"They looked at the thick, white dust which was coming down, and seemed to think: 'We have had enough of this; we may just as well die here!' Then I took out my revolver, and said:

"'I will shoot the first man who flinches.' And so they set off, but very slowly, like men whose legs were of very little use to them. I sent four of them three hundred yards ahead, to scout, and the others followed pellmell, walking at random and without any order. I put the strongest in the rear, with orders to quicken the pace of the sluggards with the points of their bayonets in the back.

"The snow seemed as if it were going to bury

us alive; it powdered our *képis** and cloaks without melting, and made phantoms of us, ghosts of worn-out soldiers who were very tired, and I said to myself: 'We shall never get out of this, except by a miracle.'

"Sometimes we had to stop for a few minutes, on account of those who could not follow us, hearing nothing but the falling snow, that vague, almost indiscernible sound which the flakes make, as they come down together. Some of the men shook themselves, but others did not move, and so I gave the order to set off again; they shouldered their rifles, and with weary feet we set out again, when suddenly the scouts fell back. Something had alarmed them; they had heard voices in front of them, and so I sent six men and a sergeant on ahead, and waited.

"All at once a shrill cry, a woman's cry, pierced through the heavy silence of the snow, and in a few minutes they brought back two prisoners, an old man and a girl, whom I questioned in a low voice. They were escaping from the Prussians, who had occupied their house during the evening, and who had got drunk. The father had become alarmed on his daughter's account, and, without even telling their servants, they had made their escape into the darkness. I saw immediately that they belonged to the upper classes, and, as I should have done in any case, I invited them to come with us. So we started off together, and as the old man knew the road, he acted as our guide.

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* Forage-caps.

"It had ceased snowing; the stars appeared, and the cold became intense. The girl, who was leaning on her father's arm, walked wearily and with jerks, and several times she murmured:

"'I have no feeling at all in my feet.' I suffered more than she did, I believe, to see that poor little woman dragging herself like that through the snow. But suddenly she stopped, and said:

"'Father, I am so tired that I cannot go any further.'

"The old man wanted to carry her, but he could not even lift her up, and she fell on the ground with a deep sigh. We all came round her, and as for me, I stamped on the ground, not knowing what to do, quite unable to make up my mind to abandon that man and girl like that. Suddenly one of the soldiers, a Parisian, whom they had nicknamed 'Pratique,' said:

"'Come, comrades, we must carry the young lady, otherwise we shall not show ourselves Frenchmen, confound it!'

"I really believe that I swore with pleasure, and said: 'That is very good of you, my children; I will take my share of the burden.'

"We could indistinctly see the trees of a little wood on the left, through the darkness. Several men went into it, and soon came back with a bundle of branches twisted into a litter.

"'Who will lend his cloak? It is for a pretty girl, comrades,' Pratique said, and ten cloaks were thrown to him. In a moment, the girl was lying, warm and comfortable, among them, and was raised upon six shoulders. I placed myself at their head, on the right, and very pleased I was with my charge.

"We started off much more briskly, as if we had been having a drink of wine, and I even heard a few jokes. A woman is quite enough to electrify Frenchmen, you see. The soldiers, who were reanimated and warm, had almost reformed their ranks, and an old *franc-tireur** who was following the litter, waiting for his turn to replace the first of his comrades who might give in, said to one of his neighbors, loud enough for me to hear:

"'I am not a young man, now; but by Jove, there is nothing like a woman to make you feel queer from head to foot!'

"We went on, almost without stopping, until three o'clock in the morning, when suddenly our scouts fell back again. Soon the whole detachment showed nothing but a vague shadow on the ground, as the men lay on the snow, and I gave my orders in a low voice, and heard the harsh, metallic sound of the cocking of rifles. There, in the middle of the plain, some strange object was moving about. It might have been taken for some enormous animal running about, which uncoiled itself like a serpent, or came together into a coil, then suddenly went quickly to the right or left, stopped, and then went on again. But presently the wandering shape came near, and I saw a dozen lancers, one behind the other, who were trying to find their way, which they had lost.

"By this time they were so near that I could hear the panting of the horses, the clink of the swords, and the creaking of the saddles, and so cried: 'Fire!'

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*Volunteers, in the Franco-German war of 1870-71, of whom the Germans often made short work when caught.

"Fifty rifle-shots broke the stillness of the night; then there were four or five reports, and at last one single shot was heard. When the smoke had cleared away we saw that the twelve men and nine horses had fallen. Three of the animals were galloping away at a furious pace. One of them was dragging the body of its rider behind it. His foot had caught in the stirrup, and his body rebounded from the ground in a horrible way.

"One of the soldiers behind me gave a harsh laugh, and said: 'There are a few more widows now!'

"Perhaps he was married. And another added: 'It did not take long!'

"A head was put out of the litter:

"'What is the matter?' she asked; 'you are fighting?'

"'It is nothing, Mademoiselle,' I replied; 'we have got rid of a dozen Prussians!'

"'Poor fellows!' she said. But as she was cold, she quickly disappeared beneath the cloaks again, and we started off once more. We marched on for a long time, and at last the sky began to grow pale. The snow became quite clear, luminous, and bright, and a rosy tint appeared in the east. Suddenly a voice in the distance cried:

"'Who goes there?'

"The whole detachment halted, and I advanced to say who we were. We had reached the French lines, and as my men defiled before the outpost, a commandant on horseback, whom I had informed of what had taken place, asked in a sonorous voice, as he saw the litter pass him:

"'What have you there?'

"And immediately a small head, covered with light hair, appeared, disheveled and smiling, and replied:

"'It is I, Monsieur.'

"At this, the men raised a hearty laugh, and we felt quite light-hearted, while Pratique, who was walking by the side of the litter, waved his *képi*, and shouted:

"'*Vive la France!*' And I felt really moved. I do not know why, except that I thought it a pretty and gallant thing to say.

"It seemed to me as if we had just saved the whole of France, and had done something that other men could not have done, something simple, and really patriotic. I shall never forget that little face, you may be sure, and if I had to give my opinion about abolishing drums, trumpets, and bugles, I should propose to replace them in every regiment by a pretty girl, and that would be even better than playing the 'Marseillaise.' By Jove! it would put some spirit into a trooper to have a Madonna like that, a living Madonna, by the colonel's side."

He was silent for a few moments, and then with an air of conviction, and jerking his head, continued:

"You see, we are very fond of women, we Frenchmen!"

VIOLATED

"REALLY," Paul repeated, "really!"

"Yes, I who am here before you have been violated, and violated by— But if I were to tell you immediately by whom, there would be no story, eh? And as you want a story, I will tell you all about it from beginning to end.

"I had been shooting for a week, over the waste lands in the heart of Brittany which border on the Black Mountains. It is a desolate and wild country, but it abounds in game. You can walk for hours without meeting a human being, and when you meet anybody, it is just the same as if you had not, for the people are absolutely ignorant of French. When I got to an inn at night, I had to employ signs to let the people know that I wanted supper and a bed.

"As I happened to be in a melancholy frame of mind at the time, the solitude delighted me, and my dog's companionship was quite enough for me. So you may guess my irritation when I perceived one morning that I was being followed, absolutely fol-

lowed, by another sportsman, who seemed to wish to enter into conversation with me. On the previous day I had noticed him obstructing the horizon several times, and had attributed it to the chances of sport, which brought us both to the same likely spots for game, but now I could not be mistaken! The fellow was evidently following me, and was stretching his little pair of compasses as much as he could so as to keep up with my long strides, and was taking short cuts, so as to catch up with me at the half circle.

"As he seemed bent upon the matter, I naturally grew obstinate, too. He spent his whole day in trying to catch up, while I spent mine in trying to baffle him. We seemed to be playing at hide-and-seek; the consequence was that when it was getting dark I had completely lost myself in the most deserted part of the moor. There was no cottage near, and not even a church spire in the distance. The only landmark was the hateful outline of that cursed man, about five hundred yards off.

"Of course he had won the game! I should have to put a good face on the matter and allow him to join me, or rather I should have to join him myself, if I did not wish to sleep in the open air with an empty stomach. So I went up to him and asked my way in a half-surly manner.

"He replied very affably that there was no inn in the neighborhood, and that the nearest village was five leagues off, but that he lived only about an hour's walk off, and considered himself very fortunate in being able to offer me hospitality.

"I was utterly done up, and could not refuse. So we went off through the heather and furze; I

walking slowly because I was so tired, and he tripping along merrily on legs like a basset hound's, they seemed so untirable.

"And yet he was an old man, and not strongly built, for I could have knocked him over by blowing on him; but how he could walk, the beast!

"He was not a troublesome companion, as I imagined he would have been, and he did not seem to wish to enter into conversation with me, as I feared he would. When he had given his invitation, and I had accepted it and thanked him in a few words, he did not open his lips again, and we walked on in silence. Yet his glances worried me, for I felt them on me, as if he wished to force me into an intimacy which my closed lips refused. But on the whole, his constant looks, which I noticed furtively, appeared sympathetic and even admiring—yes, really admiring!

"But I could not give him the same, for he was certainly not handsome; his legs were short and rather bandy, and he was thin and narrow-chested. His face was like a bit of parchment, furrowed and wrinkled, without a hair on it to hide the folds in his skin. His hair resembled that of an *Ignorantin** brother, with its gray locks falling on to a greasy collar; he had a nose like a ferret and rat's eyes, but he was able to offer me food and quarters for the night, and it was not requisite that he should be handsome in order to do that.

"Capital food, and very comfortable quarters! A manorial dwelling, a real old, well-furnished manor-

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*A lay brother in a monastery who is devoted to the instruction of the poor.

house; and in the large dining-room, in front of the huge fireplace, where a large fire was blazing, dinner was laid; I will say no more than that! There was a hotchpotch, which had been stewing since morning, no doubt; a *salmi* of woodcock, in defense of which angels would have taken up arms; buckwheat cakes in cream, flavored with aniseed, and a cheese—which is a rare thing and hardly ever to be found in Brittany—a cheese to make anyone eat a four-pound loaf, if he only smelled the rind! The whole was washed down by Chambertin, and then by brandy distilled from cider, which was so good that it made a man fancy that he had swallowed a goddess in velvet. Then came cigars, pure, smuggled Havanas; large, strong, not dry but green, fragrant and soothing to smoke.

"And how the little old gentleman stuffed and drank and smoked! He was an ogre, a quicksand, a chimney, and so was I, I must confess. Upon my word, I cannot remember what we talked about during our Gargantuan feed! We certainly talked, but what about? About shooting, certainly, and about women most probably, as men do after drinking! Yes, yes, I am quite sure he told some funny stories about women, did the little old man! Especially about a portrait hanging over the large fireplace, which represented his grandmother, a Marchioness of the old *régime*. She was a woman who had certainly played some pranks, and they said that she was still frisky when she was seventy.

"'It is extraordinary,' I remarked, 'how like you are to that portrait.'

"'Yes,' the old man replied with a smile; and then he added in his harsh, tremulous voice: 'I

resemble her in everything. I am only sixty, and I feel as if I should have lusty, hot blood in me until I am seventy.'

"And then suddenly, very much moved, and looking at me admiringly, as he had done once before, he said to the portrait:

"'I say, Marchioness, what a pity that you did not know this handsome young fellow!'

"I remembered that apostrophe and that look very well, about an hour later, when I went to bed nearly drunk, in the large room papered in white and gold, to which I was shown by a tall, broad-shouldered footman, who wished me good night in Breton.

"Good night—yes! But that implied going to sleep, which was just what I could not do. The Chambertin, the cider brandy, and the cigars had certainly made me drunk, but not so as to overcome me altogether. On the contrary, I was excited, my nerves were highly strung, my blood was heated, and I was in a half-sleep in which I felt that I was very much alive, and that my whole being was in a vibration and expansion, just as if I had been smoking hashish.

"Of course! That was it; I was dreaming while I was awake; but I saw the door open and the Marchioness come in. She had stepped down out of her frame. She had taken off her furbelows, and was in her nightgown. Her high headdress was replaced by a simple knot of ribbon, which confined her powdered hair in a small chignon, but I recognized her quite plainly by the trembling light of the candle she was carrying. It was her face—with its piercing

eyes, its pointed nose, and its smiling and sensual mouth. She did not look as young to me as she appeared in her portrait. Bah! Perhaps that was merely caused by the feeble, flickering light! But I had not even time to account for it, nor to reflect on the strangeness of the sight, nor to discuss the matter with myself and to say: 'Am I dead drunk, or is it a ghost?'

"No, I had no time, and that is the fact, for the candle was suddenly blown out and the Marchioness was in my bed and holding me in her arms.

"By Jove, yes! She did not speak. Oh, Marchioness! Marchioness! And suddenly, in spite of myself and to convince myself that it was not merely a fantastic dream, I exclaimed:

"'Why, good heavens! I am not dreaming!'

"'No, you are not dreaming,' two lips replied, trying to press themselves against mine.

"But, oh! horror! The mouth smelled of cigars and brandy! The voice was that of the little old man!

"With a bound I sent him flying on to the floor, and jumped out of bed, shouting:

"'Beast! beast!'

"Then I heard the door slam, and bare feet pattering on the stairs as he ran away. I dressed hastily in the dark and went downstairs, still shouting.

"In the hall below, where I could see through the upper windows that the dawn was breaking, I met the broad-shouldered footman, who was holding a great cudgel in his hand. He was shouting also, in Breton, and pointed to the open door, outside where my dog was waiting. What could I say to this sav-

age who did not speak French? Should I face his cudgel? There was no reason for doing so; and besides, I was more ashamed than furious. So I hastily took up my gun and my game-bag, which were in the hall, and went off without looking back.

"Disgusted with sport in that part of the country, I returned to Brest the same day, and there, timidly and with many precautions, I tried to find out something about the little old man.

"'Oh, I know!' somebody replied at last to my question; 'you are speaking of the manor-house at Hervénidozse, where the old Countess lives. She dresses like a man and sleeps with her coachman.'

"And with a deep sigh of relief, and much to the astonishment of my informant, I replied:

"'Oh! so much the better!'"

TWO LITTLE SOLDIERS

EVERY Sunday, the moment they were dismissed, the two little soldiers made off. Once outside the barracks, they struck out to the right through Courbevoie, walking with long rapid strides, as though they were on a march.

When they were beyond the last of the houses, they slackened pace along the bare, dusty roadway which goes toward Bézons.

They were both small and thin, and looked quite lost in their coats, which were too big and too long. Their sleeves hung down over their hands, and they found their enormous red breeches, which compelled them to waddle, very much in the way. Under their stiff, high helmets their faces had little character—two poor, sallow Breton faces, simple with an almost animal simplicity, and with gentle and quiet blue eyes.

They never conversed during these walks, but went straight on, each with the same thought in his head. This thought atoned for the lack of conversation; it was this, that just inside the little wood near

Les Champloux they had found a place which reminded them of their own country, where they could feel happy again.

When they arrived under the trees where the roads from Colombes and from Chatou cross, they would take off their heavy helmets and wipe their foreheads. They always halted on the Bézons bridge to look at the Seine, and would remain there two or three minutes, bent double, leaning on the parapet.

Sometimes they would gaze out over the great basin of Argenteuil, where the skiffs might be seen scudding, with their white, careening sails, recalling perhaps the look of the Breton waters, the harbor of Vanne, near which they lived, and the fishing-boats standing out across the Morbihan to the open sea.

Just beyond the Seine they bought their provisions from a sausage merchant, a baker, and a wine-seller. A piece of blood-pudding, four sous' worth of bread, and a liter of "petit bleu" constituted the provisions, which they carried off in their handkerchiefs. After they had left Bézons they traveled slowly and began to talk.

In front of them a barren plain studded with clumps of trees led to the wood, to the little wood which had seemed to them to resemble the one at Kermarivan. Grainfields and hayfields bordered the narrow path, which lost itself in the young greenness of the crops, and Jean Kerderen would always say to Luc le Ganidec:

"It looks like it does near Plounivon."

"Yes; exactly."

Side by side they strolled, their souls filled with vague memories of their own country, with awak-

ened images as naïve as the pictures on the colored broadsheets which you buy for a penny. They kept on recognizing, as it were, now a corner of a field, a hedge, a bit of moorland, now a crossroad, now a granite cross. Then, too, they would always stop beside a certain landmark, a great stone, because it looked something like the cromlech at Locneuven.

Every Sunday on arriving at the first clump of trees Luc le Ganidec would cut a switch, a hazel switch, and begin gently to peel off the bark, thinking meanwhile of the folk at home. Jean Kerderen carried the provisions.

From time to time Luc would mention a name, or recall some deed of their childhood in a few brief words, which caused long thoughts. And their own country, their dear, distant country, recaptured them little by little, seizing on their imaginations, and sending to them from afar her shapes, her sounds, her well-known prospects, her odors—odors of the green lands where the salt sea-air was blowing.

No longer conscious of the exhalations of the Parisian stables, on which the earth of the *banlieue* fattens, they scented the perfume of the flowering broom, which the salt breeze of the open sea plucks and bears away. And the sails of the boats from the river banks seemed like the white wings of the coasting vessels seen beyond the great plain which extended from their homes to the very margin of the sea.

They walked with short steps, Luc le Ganidec and Jean Kerderen, content and sad, haunted by a sweet melancholy, by the lingering, ever-present sorrow of a caged animal who remembers his liberty.

By the time that Luc had stripped the slender wand of its bark they reached the corner of the wood where every Sunday they took breakfast. They found the two bricks which they kept hidden in the thicket, and kindled a little fire of twigs, over which to roast the blood-pudding at the end of a bayonet.

When they had breakfasted, eaten their bread to the last crumb, and drunk their wine to the last drop, they remained seated side by side upon the grass, saying nothing, their eyes on the distance, their eyelids drooping, their fingers crossed as at mass, their red legs stretched out beside the poppies of the field. And the leather of their helmets and the brass of their buttons glittered in the ardent sun, making the larks, which sang and hovered above their heads, cease in mid-song.

Toward noon they began to turn their eyes from time to time in the direction of the village of Bézons, because the girl with the cow was coming. She passed by them every Sunday on her way to milk and change the pasture of her cow—the only cow in this district which ever went out of the stable to grass. It was pastured in a narrow field along the edge of the wood a little farther on.

They soon perceived the girl, the only human being within vision, and were gladdened by the brilliant reflections thrown off by the tin milk-pail under the rays of the sun. They never talked about her. They were simply glad to see her, without understanding why.

She was a big strong wench with red hair, burned by the heat of sunny days, a sturdy product of the environs of Paris.

Once, finding them seated in the same place, she said:

"Good morning. You two are always here, aren't you?"

Luc le Ganidec, the bolder, stammered:

"Yes, we come to rest."

That was all. But the next Sunday she laughed on seeing them, laughed with a protecting benevolence and a feminine keenness which knew well enough that they were bashful. And she asked:

"What are you doing there? Are you trying to see the grass grow?"

Luc was cheered up by this, and smiled likewise: "Maybe we are."

"That's pretty slow work," said she.

He answered, still laughing: "Well, yes, it is."

She went on. But coming back with a milk-pail full of milk, she stopped again before them, and said:

"Would you like a little? It will taste like home."

With the instinctive feeling that they were of the same peasant race as she, being herself perhaps also far away from home, she had divined and touched the spot.

They were both touched. Then with some difficulty, she managed to make a little milk run into the neck of the glass bottle in which they carried their wine. And Luc drank first, with little swallows, stopping every minute to see whether he had drunk more than his half. Then he handed the bottle to Jean.

She stood upright before them, her hands on her hips, her pail on the ground at her feet, glad at the pleasure which she had given.

Then she departed, shouting: "*Allons,* adieu! Till next Sunday!"

And as long as they could see her at all, they followed with their eyes her tall silhouette, which faded, growing smaller and smaller, seeming to sink into the verdure of the fields.

When they were leaving the barracks the week after, Jean said to Luc:

"Oughtn't we to buy her something good?"

They were in great embarrassment before the problem of the choice of a delicacy for the girl with the cow. Luc was of the opinion that a little tripe would be the best, but Jean preferred some *berlingots* because he was fond of sweets. His choice fairly made him enthusiastic, and they bought at a grocer's two sous' worth of white and red candies.

They ate their breakfast more rapidly than usual, being nervous with expectation.

Jean saw her first. "There she is!" he cried. Luc added: "Yes, there she is."

While yet some distance off she laughed at seeing them. Then she cried:

"Is everything going as you like it?"

And in unison they asked:

"Are you getting on all right?"

Then she conversed, talked to them of simple things in which they felt an interest—of the weather, of the crops, and of her master.

They were afraid to offer her the candies, which were slowly melting away in Jean's pocket.

At last Luc grew bold, and murmured:

"We have brought you something."

She demanded, "What is it? Tell me!"

Then Jean, blushing up to his ears, managed to get at the little paper cornucopia, and held it out.

She began to eat the little bonbons, rolling them from one cheek to the other where they made little round lumps. The two soldiers, seated before her, gazed at her with emotion and delight.

Then she went to milk her cow, and once more gave them some milk on coming back.

They thought of her all the week; several times they even spoke of her. The next Sunday she sat down with them for a little longer talk; and all three, seated side by side, their eyes lost in the distance, clasping their knees with their hands, told the small doings, the minute details of life in the villages where they had been born, while over there the cow, seeing that the milkmaid had stopped on her way, stretched out toward her its heavy head with its dripping nostrils, and gave a long low to call her.

Soon the girl consented to eat a bit of bread with them and drink a mouthful of wine. She often brought them plums in her pocket, for the season of plums had come. Her presence sharpened the wits of the two little Breton soldiers, and they chattered like two birds.

But, one Tuesday, Luc le Ganidec asked for leave —a thing which had never happened before—and he did not return until ten o'clock at night. Jean racked his brains uneasily for a reason for his comrade's going out in this way.

The next Thursday Luc, having borrowed ten sous from his bedfellow, again asked and obtained permission to leave the barracks for several hours. When he set off with Jean on their Sunday walk his man-

ner was very queer, quite restless, and quite changed. Kerderen did not understand, but he vaguely suspected something without divining what it could be.

They did not say a word to one another until they reached their usual halting-place, where, from their constant sitting in the same spot the grass was quite worn away. They ate their breakfast slowly. Neither of them felt hungry.

Before long the girl appeared. As on every Sunday, they watched her coming. When she was quite near, Luc rose and made two steps forward. She put her milk-pail on the ground and kissed him. She kissed him passionately, throwing her arms about his neck, without noticing Jean, without remembering that he was there, without even seeing him.

And he sat there desperate, poor Jean, so desperate that he did not understand, his soul quite overwhelmed, his heart bursting, but not yet understanding himself. Then the girl seated herself beside Luc, and they began to chatter.

Jean did not look at them. He now divined why his comrade had gone out twice during the week, and he felt within him a burning grief, a kind of wound, that sense of rending which is caused by treason.

Luc and the girl went off together to change the position of the cow. Jean followed them with his eyes. He saw them departing side by side. The red breeches of his comrade made a bright spot on the road. It was Luc who picked up the mallet and hammered down the stake to which they tied the beast.

The girl stooped to milk her, while he stroked the cow's sharp spine with a careless hand. Then they

left the milk-pail on the grass, and went deep into the wood.

Jean saw nothing but the wall of leaves where they had entered; and he felt himself so troubled that if he had tried to rise he would certainly have fallen. He sat motionless, stupefied by astonishment and suffering, with an agony which was simple but deep. He wanted to cry, to run away, to hide himself, never to see anybody any more.

Soon he saw them issuing from the thicket. They returned slowly, holding each other's hands as in the villages do those who are promised. It was Luc who carried the pail.

They kissed one another again before they separated, and the girl went off after having thrown Jean a friendly "Good evening" and a smile which was full of meaning. To-day she no longer thought of offering him any milk.

The two little soldiers sat side by side, motionless as usual, silent and calm, their placid faces betraying nothing of all which troubled their hearts. The sun fell on them. Sometimes the cow lowed, looking at them from afar.

At their usual hour they rose to go back. Luc cut a switch. Jean carried the empty bottle to return it to the wine-seller at Bézons. Then they sallied out upon the bridge, and, as they did every Sunday, stopped several minutes in the middle to watch the water flowing.

Jean leaned, leaned more and more, over the iron railing, as though he saw in the current something which attracted him. Luc said: "Are you trying to drink?" Just as he uttered the last word Jean's head

overbalanced his body, his legs described a circle in the air, and the little blue and red soldier fell in a heap, struck the water, and disappeared.

Luc, his tongue paralyzed with anguish, tried in vain to shout. Farther down he saw something stir; then the head of his comrade rose to the surface of the river and sank immediately. Farther still he again perceived a hand, a single hand, which issued from the stream and then disappear. That was all.

The bargemen who dragged the river did not find the body that day.

Luc set out alone for the barracks, going at a run, his soul filled with despair. He told of the accident, with tears in his eyes, and a husky voice, blowing his nose again and again: "He leaned over—he—he leaned over—so far—so far that his head turned a somersault; and—and—so he fell—he fell—"

Choked with emotion, he could say no more. If he had only known!

GHOSTS

JUST at the time when the Concordat was in its most flourishing condition, a young man belonging to a wealthy and highly respectable middle-class family went to the office of the head of the police at P——, and begged for his help and advice, which was immediately promised him.

"My father threatens to disinherit me," the young man began, "although I have never offended against the laws of the State, of morality, or against his paternal authority, merely because I do not share his blind reverence for the Catholic Church and her clergy. On that account he looks upon me, not merely as Latitudinarian but as a perfect Atheist, and a faithful old manservant of ours, who is much attached to me, and who accidentally saw my father's will, told me in confidence that he had left all his property to the Jesuits. I think this is highly suspicious, and I fear that the priests have been maligning me to my father. Until less than a year ago, we used

to live very quietly and happily together, but ever since he has had so much to do with the clergy, our domestic peace and happiness are at an end."

"What you have told me," replied the official, "is as likely as it is regrettable, but I fail to see how I can interfere in the matter. Your father is in full possession of all his mental faculties, and can dispose of all his property exactly as he pleases. I think that your protest is premature; you must wait until his will can legally take effect, and then you can invoke the aid of justice. I am sorry to say that just now I can do nothing for you."

"I think you will be able to," the young man replied; "for I believe that a very clever piece of deceit is being carried on."

"How? Please explain yourself more clearly."

"When I remonstrated with him, yesterday evening, he referred to my dead mother, and at last assured me, in a voice of the deepest conviction, that she had frequently appeared to him, had threatened him with all the torments of the damned, if he did not disinherit his son, who had fallen away from God, and leave all his property to the Church. Now I do not believe in ghosts."

"Neither do I," the police director replied, "but I cannot well do anything on such grounds, having nothing but superstitions to go upon. You know how the Church rules all our affairs since the Concordat with Rome, and if I investigate this matter and obtain no results, I am risking my post. It would be very different if you could adduce any proofs for your suspicions. I do not deny that I should like to see the clerical party, which will, I

fear, be the ruin of Austria, receive a staggering blow; try, therefore, to get to the bottom of this business, and then we will talk it over again."

About a month passed, without the young Latitudinarian being heard of. Suddenly, he came one evening, in a great state of excitement, and told the Inspector that he was in a position to expose the priestly deceit which he had mentioned, if the authorities would assist him. The police director asked for further information.

"I have obtained a number of important clues," said the young man. "In the first place, my father confessed to me that my mother did not appear to him in our house, but in the churchyard where she is buried. My mother was consumptive for many years, and a few weeks before her death she went to the village of S——, where she died and was buried. In addition to this, I found out from our footman that my father has already left the house twice, late at night, in company of X——, the Jesuit priest, and that on both occasions he did not return till morning. Each time he was remarkably uneasy and low-spirited after his return, and had three masses said for my dead mother. He also told me just now that he has to leave home this evening on business, but, immediately after he told me that, our footman saw the Jesuit go out of the house. We may, therefore, assume that he intends this evening to consult the spirit of my dead mother again, and this would be an excellent opportunity to solve the matter, if you do not object to opposing the most powerful force in the Empire for the sake of such an insignificant individual as myself."

"Every citizen has an equal right to the protec-

tion of the State," the police director replied; "and I think that I have shown often enough that I am not wanting in courage to perform my duty, no matter how serious the consequences may be. But only very young men act without any prospects of success, because they are carried away by their feelings. When you came to me the first time, I was obliged to refuse your request for assistance, but to-day your request is just and reasonable. It is now eight o'clock; I shall expect you in two hours' time, here in my office. At present, all you have to do is to hold your tongue; everything else is my affair."

As soon as it was dark, four men got into a closed carriage in the yard of the police-office, and were driven in the direction of the village of S——. Their carriage, however, did not enter the village, but stopped at the edge of a small wood in the immediate neighborhood. Here all four alighted: the police director, accompanied by the young Latitudinarian, a police sergeant, and an ordinary policeman, the latter however, dressed in plain clothes.

"The first thing for us to do is to examine the locality carefully," said the police director. "It is eleven o'clock and the exorcisers of ghosts will not arrive before midnight, so we have time to look round us, and to lay our plans."

The four men went to the churchyard, which lay at the end of the village, near the little wood. Everything was as still as death, and not a soul was to be seen. The sexton was evidently sitting in the public house, for they found the door of his cottage locked, as well as the door of the little chapel that stood in the middle of the churchyard.

"Where is your mother's grave?" the police director asked. As there were only a few stars visible, it was not easy to find it, but at last they managed it, and the police director surveyed the neighborhood of it.

"The position is not a very favorable one for us," he said at last; "there is nothing here, not even a shrub, behind which we could hide."

But just then, the policeman reported that he had tried to get into the sexton's hut through the door or a window, and that at last he had succeeded in doing so by breaking open a square in a window which had been mended with paper, that he had opened it and obtained possession of the key, which he brought to the police director.

The plans were very quickly settled. The police director had the chapel opened and went in with the young Latitudinarian; then he told the police sergeant to lock the door behind him and to put the key back where he had found it, and to shut the window of the sexton's cottage carefully. Lastly, he made arrangements as to what they were to do, in case anything unforeseen should occur, whereupon the sergeant and the constable left the churchyard, and lay down in a ditch at some distance from the gate, but opposite to it.

Almost as soon as the clock struck half past eleven, they heard steps near the chapel, whereupon the police director and the young Latitudinarian went to the window in order to watch the beginning of the exorcism, and as the chapel was in total darkness, they thought that they should be able to see without being seen; but matters turned out differently from what they expected.

Suddenly, the key turned in the lock. They barely had time to conceal themselves behind the altar, before two men came in, one of whom was carrying a dark lantern. One was the young man's father, an elderly man of the middle class, who seemed very unhappy and depressed, the other the Jesuit father X——, a tall, lean, big-boned man, with a thin, bilious face, in which two large gray eyes shone restlessly under bushy, black eyebrows. He lit the tapers, which were standing on the altar, and began to say a "Requiem Mass"; while the old man kneeled on the altar steps and served him.

When it was over, the Jesuit took the book of the Gospels and the holy-water sprinkler, and went slowly out of the chapel, the old man following him with the holy-water basin in one hand, and a taper in the other. Then the police director left his hiding place, and stooping down, so as not to be seen, crept to the chapel window, where he cowered down carefully; the young man followed his example. They were now looking straight at his mother's grave.

The Jesuit, followed by the superstitious old man, walked three times round the grave; then he remained standing before it, and by the light of the taper read a few passages from the Gospel. Then he dipped the holy-water sprinkler three times into the holy-water basin, and sprinkled the grave three times. Then both returned to the chapel, kneeled down outside it with their faces toward the grave, and began to pray aloud, until at last the Jesuit sprang up, in a species of wild ecstasy, and cried out three times in a shrill voice:

*"Exsurge! Exsurge! Exsurge!"**

Scarcely had the last words of the exorcism died away, when thick, blue smoke rose out of the grave, rapidly grew into a cloud, and began to assume the outlines of a human body, until at last a tall, white figure stood behind the grave, and beckoned with its hand.

"Who art thou?" the Jesuit asked solemnly, while the old man began to cry.

"When I was alive, I was called Anna Maria B——," replied the ghost in a hollow voice.

"Will you answer all my questions?" the priest continued.

"As far as I can."

"Have you not yet been delivered from purgatory by our prayers, and by all the Masses for your soul, which we have said for you?"

"Not yet, but soon, soon I shall be."

"When?"

"As soon as that blasphemer, my son, has been punished."

"Has that not already happened? Has not your husband disinherited his lost son, and in his place made the Church his heir?"

"That is not enough."

"What must he do besides?"

"He must deposit his will with the Judicial Authorities, as his last will and testament, and drive the reprobate out of his house."

"Consider well what you are saying; must this really be?"

---

* Arise!

"It must, or otherwise I shall have to languish in purgatory much longer," the sepulchral voice replied with a deep sigh; but the next moment the ghost yelled out in terror: "Oh! Good Lord!" and began to run away as fast as it could. A shrill whistle was heard, and then another, and the police director laid his hand on the shoulder of the exorciser with the remark:

"You are in custody."

Meanwhile, the police sergeant and the policeman, who had come into the churchyard, had caught the ghost, and dragged it forward. It was the sexton, who had put on a flowing, white dress, and wore a wax mask, which bore a striking resemblance to his mother, so the son declared.

When the case was heard, it was proved that the mask had been very skillfully made from a portrait of the deceased woman. The government gave orders that the matter should be investigated as secretly as possible, and left the punishment of Father X—— to the spiritual authorities, which was a matter of necessity, at a time when priests were outside of the jurisdiction of the civil authorities. It is needless to say that Father X—— was very comfortable during his imprisonment in a monastery, in a part of the country which abounded with game and trout.

The only valuable result of the amusing ghost story was that it brought about a reconciliation between father and son; the former, as a matter of fact, felt such deep respect for priests and their ghosts in consequence of the apparition, that a short time after his wife had left purgatory for the last time in order to talk with him, he turned Protestant.

WAS IT A DREAM?

"I HAD loved her madly!

"Why does one love? Why does one love? How queer it is to see only one being in the world, to have only one thought in one's mind, only one desire in the heart, and only one name on the lips—a name which comes up continually, rising, like the water in a spring, from the depths of the soul to the lips, a name which one repeats over and over again, which one whispers ceaselessly, everywhere, like a prayer.

"I am going to tell you our story, for love only has one, which is always the same. I met her and loved her; that is all. And for a whole year I have lived on her tenderness, on her caresses, in her arms, in her dresses, on her words, so completely wrapped up, bound, and absorbed in everything which came from her, that I no longer cared whether it was day or night, or whether I was dead or alive, on this old earth of ours.

"And then she died. How? I do not know; I no longer know anything. But one evening she came

home wet, for it was raining heavily, and the next day she coughed, and she coughed for about a week, and took to her bed. What happened I do not remember now, but doctors came, wrote, and went away. Medicines were brought, and some women made her drink them. Her hands were hot, her forehead was burning, and her eyes bright and sad. When I spoke to her, she answered me, but I do not remember what we said. I have forgotten everything, everything, everything! She died, and I very well remember her slight, feeble sigh. The nurse said: 'Ah!' and I understood, I understood!

"I knew nothing more, nothing. I saw a priest, who said: 'Your mistress?' and it seemed to me as if he were insulting her. As she was dead, nobody had the right to say that any longer, and I turned him out. Another came who was very kind and tender, and I shed tears when he spoke to me about her.

"They consulted me about the funeral, but I do not remember anything that they said, though I recollected the coffin, and the sound of the hammer when they nailed her down in it. Oh! God, God!

"She was buried! Buried! She! In that hole! Some people came—female friends. I made my escape and ran away. I ran, and then walked through the streets, went home, and the next day started on a journey.

* * * * * * *

"Yesterday I returned to Paris, and when I saw my room again—our room, our bed, our furniture, everything that remains of the life of a human being after death—I was seized by such a violent attack of

fresh grief, that I felt like opening the window and throwing myself out into the street. I could not remain any longer among these things, between these walls which had inclosed and sheltered her, which retained a thousand atoms of her, of her skin and of her breath, in their imperceptible crevices. I took up my hat to make my escape, and just as I reached the door, I passed the large glass in the hall, which she had put there so that she might look at herself every day from head to foot as she went out, to see if her toilette looked well, and was correct and pretty, from her little boots to her bonnet.

"I stopped short in front of that looking-glass in which she had so often been reflected—so often, so often, that it must have retained her reflection. I was standing there, trembling, with my eyes fixed on the glass—on that flat, profound, empty glass—which had contained her entirely, and had possessed her as much as I, as my passionate looks had. I felt as if I loved that glass. I touched it; it was cold. Oh! the recollection! sorrowful mirror, burning mirror, horrible mirror, to make men suffer such torments! Happy is the man whose heart forgets everything that it has contained, everything that has passed before it, everything that has looked at itself in it, or has been reflected in its affection, in its love! How I suffer!

"I went out without knowing it, without wishing it, and toward the cemetery. I found her simple grave, a white marble cross, with these few words:

"'She loved, was loved, and died.'

"She is there, below, decayed! How horrible! I sobbed with my forehead on the ground, and I stopped

there for a long time, a long time. Then I saw that it was getting dark, and a strange, mad wish, the wish of a despairing lover, seized me. I wished to pass the night, the last night, in weeping on her grave. But I should be seen and driven out. How was I to manage? I was cunning, and got up and began to roam about in that city of the dead. I walked and walked. How small this city is, in comparison with the other, the city in which we live. And yet, how much more numerous the dead are than the living. We want high houses, wide streets, and much room for the four generations who see the daylight at the same time, drink water from the spring, and wine from the vines, and eat bread from the plains.

"And for all the generations of the dead, for all that ladder of humanity that has descended down to us, there is scarcely anything, scarcely anything! The earth takes them back, and oblivion effaces them. Adieu!

"At the end of the cemetery, I suddenly perceived that I was in its oldest part, where those who had been dead a long time are mingling with the soil, where the crosses themselves are decayed, where possibly newcomers will be put to-morrow. It is full of untended roses, of strong and dark cypress-trees, a sad and beautiful garden, nourished on human flesh.

"I was alone, perfectly alone. So I crouched in a green tree and hid myself there completely amid the thick and somber branches. I waited, clinging to the stem, like a shipwrecked man does to a plank.

"When it was quite dark, I left my refuge and began to walk softly, slowly, inaudibly, through that

ground full of dead people. I wandered about for a long time, but could not find her tomb again. I went on with extended arms, knocking against the tombs with my hands, my feet, my knees, my chest, even with my head, without being able to find her. I groped about like a blind man finding his way, I felt the stones, the crosses, the iron railings, the metal wreaths, and the wreaths of faded flowers! I read the names with my fingers, by passing them over the letters. What a night! What a night! I could not find her again!

"There was no moon. What a night! I was frightened, horribly frightened in these narrow paths, between two rows of graves. Graves! graves! graves! nothing but graves! On my right, on my left, in front of me, around me, everywhere there were graves! I sat down on one of them, for I could not walk any longer, my knees were so weak. I could hear my heart beat! And I heard something else as well. What? A confused, nameless noise. Was the noise in my head, in the impenetrable night, or beneath the mysterious earth, the earth sown with human corpses? I looked all around me, but I cannot say how long I remained there; I was paralyzed with terror, cold with fright, ready to shout out, ready to die.

"Suddenly, it seemed to me that the slab of marble on which I was sitting, was moving. Certainly it was moving, as if it were being raised. With a bound, I sprang on to the neighboring tomb, and I saw, yes, I distinctly saw the stone which I had just quitted rise upright. Then the dead person appeared, a naked skeleton, pushing the stone back

with its bent back. I saw it quite clearly, although the night was so dark. On the cross I could read:

"'Here lies Jacques Olivant, who died at the age of fifty-one. He loved his family, was kind and honorable, and died in the grace of the Lord.'

"The dead man also read what was inscribed on his tombstone; then he picked up a stone off the path, a little, pointed stone, and began to scrape the letters carefully. He slowly effaced them, and with the hollows of his eyes he looked at the places where they had been engraved. Then with the tip of the bone that had been his forefinger, he wrote in luminous letters, like those lines which boys trace on walls with the tip of a lucifer match:

"'Here reposes Jacques Olivant, who died at the age of fifty-one. He hastened his father's death by his unkindness, as he wished to inherit his fortune, he tortured his wife, tormented his children, deceived his neighbors, robbed everyone he could, and died wretched.'

"When he had finished writing, the dead man stood motionless, looking at his work. On turning round I saw that all the graves were open, that all the dead bodies had emerged from them, and that all had effaced the lies inscribed on the gravestones by their relations, substituting the truth instead. And I saw that all had been the tormentors of their neighbors—malicious, dishonest, hypocrites, liars, rogues, calumniators, envious; that they had stolen, deceived, performed every disgraceful, every abominable action, these good fathers, these faithful wives, these devoted sons, these chaste daughters, these honest tradesmen, these men and women who were called irreproachable. They were all writing at the same time, on

the threshold of their eternal abode, the truth, the terrible and the holy truth of which everybody was ignorant, or pretended to be ignorant, while they were alive.

"I thought that *she* also must have written something on her tombstone, and now running without any fear among the half-open coffins, among the corpses and skeletons, I went toward her, sure that I should find her immediately. I recognized her at once, without seeing her face, which was covered by the winding-sheet, and on the marble cross, where shortly before I had read:

"'She loved, was loved, and died.'

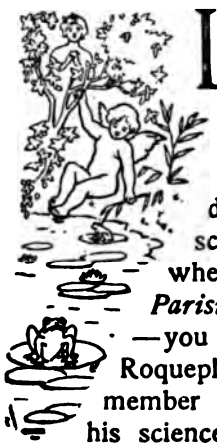
I now saw:

"'Having gone out in the rain one day, in order to deceive her lover, she caught cold and died.'

* * * * * * *

"It appears that they found me at daybreak, lying on the grave unconscious."

THE NEW SENSATION



LITTLE Madame d'Ormonde certainly had the devil in her. She rejoiced in a fantastic, baffling brain, through which the most unheard-of caprices passed, in which ideas danced and jostled each other, like those pieces of differently colored glass in a kaleidoscope, which form such strange figures when they have been shaken. In her *Parisine* was fermenting to such an extent —you know the analysis of *Parisine*, which Roqueplan lately gave—that the most learned member of The Institute would have wasted his science and his wisdom if he had tried to follow her slips and her subterfuges.

That was, very likely, the reason why she attracted, retained, and infatuated even those who had paid their debt to implacable love—men who thought they were strong, free from those passions under the influence of which men lose their heads, and beyond the reach of woman's perfidious snares. Perhaps, it was her small, soft, delicate, white hands, which always smelled of some subtle, delicious perfume, and those small

fingers which men kissed almost with devotion, and with absolute pleasure. Or, perhaps, it was her silky, golden hair, or her large, blue eyes, full of enigma, of curiosity, of desire, or her changeable mouth, small and infantine at one moment, when she was pouting, and smiling and as open as a rose that is unfolding in the sun when she opened it in a laugh and showed her pearly teeth, so that it became a target for kisses. Who will ever be able to explain the magic and sorcery which some Chosen Women exercise over all men, the despotic authority against which nobody would think of rebelling?

Among the numerous men who had wooed her, who were anxiously waiting for that wonderful moment when her heart would beat, when this mocking companion would grow tired and abandon herself to the pleasure of loving and of being loved, would become intoxicated with the honey of caresses, and would no longer refuse her lips to kisses, like some restive animal that fears to yoke, none had so made up his mind to win the game, and pursue this deceptive siege, as Xavier de Fontrailles. He labored for his object with a patient energy and a strength of will which no snubs could weaken—with the ardent fervor of a believer who has started on a long pilgrimage, and who supports all the suffering of the long journey with the fixed and consoling idea that one day he will be able to throw himself on his knees at the shrine where he would worship, and to listen to the divine words which will mean Paradise to him.

He gave way to Madame d'Ormonde's slightest whims, did all he could to amuse her, never hurt her feelings, strove to become a friend whom she could

not do without, *the* friend of whom, in the end, a woman grows more jealous than she does of her husband, and to whom she confesses everything, her daily worries and her dreams of the future.

She would very likely have suffered and wept, have felt a void in her existence, if they had separated forever, if he had disappeared. She would not have hesitated to defend him, even at the risk of compromising herself and of passing as his mistress, if any one had attacked him in her presence, and sometimes she would say, with a sudden, laughing sadness in her voice:

"If I were really capable of loving for five minutes consecutively, I should love you."

When they were walking in the Bois de Boulogne, while the victoria was waiting near Armenonville, during afternoon talks when, as he used to say, they were hanging over the abyss until they both grew giddy, and spoke of love madly and ceaselessly,—returning to the subject constantly, and steeping themselves with it,—Madame d'Ormonde would occasionally propound one of her favorite theories. Yes, she certainly understood what possession of a beloved object was, that touch of madness which seizes you from head to foot, which fires your blood, making you forget everything else in a man's embraces, in that supreme pleasure which overwhelms you, and which rivets two beings together forever, in heart and in brain. But she cared for it only at some unexpected moment, in a strange place, with a touch of something novel about it, which one would remember all one's life, of something amusing and almost maddening, which one had been in search of

for a long time, and which imparted a breath of romance, as it were, into the commonplace details of ordinary love.

And Xavier de Fontrailles did all he could to discover such a place, but failed. He tried a bachelor's lodgings with silk tapestry, like a boudoir of the seventeenth century, a villa hidden like a nest among trees and rosebushes, a Japanese house furnished in extraordinary fashion and very expensively, with latticed windows from which one could see the sea, an old melancholy palace, from which one could see the Grand Canal, rooms, hotels, queer quarters, private rooms in restaurants, and small country houses in the recesses of woods.

Madame d'Ormonde went on her way without turning her head, but Xavier, alas! became more and more smitten, as amorous as an overgrown schoolboy who has never hitherto had any converse with a woman, and who is foolish enough to pick up the flowers that fall from her bodice, and to be lost and unhappy when he does not see her, or hear her soft, cooing voice, or see her smile.

One evening, however, he had gone with her to the fair at Saint-Cloud. They went into three shows, deafened by the noise of the organs, the whistling of the machinery of the roundabouts, and the hubbub of the crowd that flowed among the booths illuminated by paraffin lamps. As they were passing in front of a fortune-teller's van, Monsieur de Fontrailles stopped and said to Madame d'Ormonde:

"Would you like to have your fortune told?"

The van was a very fine specimen of its kind, and had, no doubt, traveled far and wide. Placards and

portraits, bordered by advertisements, hung above the shaky steps, and the small windows with their closed shutters were almost hidden by boxes of sweet basil and mignonette, while an old, bald parrot, with her feathers all ruffled, was asleep just outside.

The fortune-teller was sitting on a chair, quietly knitting a stocking. On their approach she got up, went up to Madame d'Ormonde and said in an unctuous voice:

"I reveal the present, the past, and the future, and even the name of the future husband or wife, and of deceased relations, as well as my client's present and future circumstances. I have performed before crowned heads. The Emperor of Brazil came to me, with the illustrious poet, Victor Hugo. My charge is five francs for telling your fortune from the cards or by your hand, and twenty francs for the whole lot. Would you like the lot, Madame?"

Madame d'Ormonde gave vent to a burst of sonorous laughter, like a street girl who is amusing herself. But they went in and Monsieur de Fontrailles opened the glass door, which was covered by a heavy red curtain. When they entered, the young woman uttered an exclamation of surprise. The interior of the van was full of roses, arranged in the most charming manner, as if for a lovers' meeting. On a table covered with a damask cloth, surrounded by piles of cushions, a supper was waiting for chance comers, and at the other end, concealed by heavy hangings, one could see a large, wide bed, one of those beds which give rise to suggestion!

Xavier had shut the door again, and Madame d'Ormonde looked at him in a strange manner, with

rather flushed cheeks, with palpitating nostrils, and with a look in her eyes such as he had never seen in them before. In a very low voice, while his heart beat violently, he whispered into her ear:

"Well, does the decoration please you this time?"

She replied by holding up her lips to him, and then filled two glasses with extra dry champagne, which was as pale as the skin of a fair woman. Then she said, almost as if already rather drunk:

"I am decidedly worth a big stake!"

It was in this fashion that Madame d'Ormonde, for the first and last time, deceived her husband; and it was at the fair at Saint-Cloud, in a fortune-teller's van.

VIRTUE!

Every Friday, regularly, about eleven o'clock in the morning, he came into the courtyard, put down his soft hat at his feet, struck a few chords on his guitar and began a ballad in a full, rich voice. And soon at every window in the four sides of that dull, barracklike building appeared some girls, one in an elegant dressing-gown, another in a little jacket, most of them with their bosoms and arms bare, all of them just out of bed, with their hair hastily twisted up, their eyes blinking in the sudden blaze of sunlight, their complexions dull, and their eyes still heavy with sleep.

They swayed in time to his slow melody, and gave themselves up to the enjoyment of it. Pennies, and even silver poured into the handsome singer's hat, and more than one of them would have liked to follow the penny which she threw to him, and go with this singer who had the voice of a siren. For he seemed to say to all these amorous girls: "Come,

come to my retreat, for there you will find a palace of crystal and gold, wreaths which are always fresh, and happiness and love which never die."

That was what they seemed to hear, these unhappy girls, when they heard him sing the old legends which in childhood they had believed. That was what they understood by the simple words of the ballad—that and nothing else. How could anyone doubt it, seeing the fresh roses on their cheeks, and the tender lights which flickered like mystic fires in their eyes, now, for the moment, once more the eyes of innocent young girls? But, alas! of young girls who had grown up too quickly, who were too precocious, and who had too soon become what they were, poor vendors of love, always in search of that love for which they were paid.

That was why, when he had finished his second ballad, and sometimes sooner, concupiscent looks appeared in their eyes. The boatman of their dreams, the water-sprite of the fairy tales, vanished in the mist of childish recollections, and the singer reassumed his real shape, that of a wandering minstrel and strolling player, whom they wished to requite with love. And the coppers and small silver were showered on him again, with engaging smiles, with the leers of amorous women, even with a *"P'st, P'st,"* which soon transformed the barracklike courtyard into an enormous cage full of twittering birds. Several of them could not restrain themselves, but ejaculated, their eyes filled with desire: "How handsome—good heavens, *how* handsome he is!"

He was really handsome—nobody could deny it, even too handsome, with that regular beauty which

almost palls on you. He had large, gentle, almond-shaped eyes, a Grecian nose, a bow-shaped mouth hidden by a heavy mustache, and long, black, curly hair; in short, a head fit to be put into a hairdresser's window, or, better still, perhaps, on to the front page of the ballads he was singing. What made him still handsomer was that his self-conceit wore a cloak of sovereign indifference, for not only was he blind to the ogling and deaf to the *"P'st, P'st's,"* but when he had finished he shrugged his shoulders, winked mischievously, and curled his lips contemptuously, as if to say: "The stove is not being heated for you, my little kittens!"

You would have thought that he wished to show his contempt, make himself commonplace in the eyes of these amorous girls, and to dampen their ardor, for he cleared his throat ostentatiously and offensively, far more than was necessary, after singing, as if he would have liked to spit at them. But even this did not make him unpoetical in their eyes, and most of them, absolutely mad over him, went so far as to say that he did it "like a swell!"

The girl who in her enthusiasm had been the first to utter an exclamation of intense passion, after tossing him small silver, had thrown him a twenty-franc gold-piece, and made up her mind to have an answer. This morning instead of a *"P'st, P'st"* she spoke out boldly despite the presence and silence of the others.

At first they were dumfounded at her audacity, and then all their cheeks flushed with jealousy, and the flame of desire shot from their eyes. Then from every window there came a perfect torrent of:

"Yes, come up, come up." "Don't go there! Come here."

Meanwhile, there was a shower of half-pence, of francs, of gold coins, of cigars and oranges, while lace pocket handkerchiefs, silk neckties, and scarfs fluttered in the air and fell round the singer, like a flight of many-colored butterflies.

The minstrel picked up the spoil calmly, almost carelessly, stuffed the money into his pocket, made a bundle of the furbelows, which he tied up as if they had been soiled linen, and then rising up, he put his felt hat on his head and said:

"Thank you, ladies, but indeed I cannot."

They thought that he was embarrassed by so many simultaneous demands, and one of them said: "Let him choose."

"Yes, yes, that is it!" they exclaimed in unison.

But he repeated: "I tell you, I cannot."

They put his refusal down to his gallantry, and several of them exclaimed, almost with tears of emotion: "He is all heart!" And the same voice that had spoken before (it was the one who wished to settle the matter amicably) said: "We must draw lots."

"Yes, yes, we will," they all cried. And again there was a deeper silence than before, for it was caused by anxiety, their hearts beating almost audibly.

The singer profited by it to say slowly: "I cannot allow that either; I neither desire all of you at once, nor one after the other—at any time! I tell you once for all."

"Why? Why?" Now they were almost screaming, angry, and sorry at the same time. Their cheeks

had turned from scarlet to livid, their eyes flashed fire, and some shook their fists menacingly.

"Silence!" cried the girl, who had spoken first. "Be quiet, you pack of hussies! Let him explain himself, and tell us why!"

"Yes, yes, be quiet! Make him explain himself, in God's name!"

Then, in the expectant silence that ensued, the singer said, opening his arms wide, with a gesture of despairing inability to do what they wanted:

"Why do you want me? It is very flattering, but I cannot gratify you, for I have two girls of my own at home."

THE THIEF

"CERTAINLY," exclaimed Dr. Sorbier, who, while appearing to be thinking of something else, had been listening quietly to those surprising accounts of burglaries and of daring acts which might have been borrowed from the trial of Cartouche.

"Certainly, I do not know any viler fault, nor any meaner action than to attack a girl's innocence, to corrupt her, to profit by a moment of unconscious weakness and of madness, when her heart is beating like that of a frightened fawn, when her body, which has been unpolluted up till then, is palpitating with desire and her pure lips seek those of her seducer—when her whole being is feverish and vanquished, and she abandons herself without thinking of the irremediable stain, nor of her fall, nor of the painful awakening on the morrow.

"The man who has brought this about slowly, viciously, and none can tell with what science of evil, and who, in such a case, has not steadiness and self-restraint enough to quench that flame by some icy

words, who has not sense enough for two, who cannot recover his self-possession and master the runaway brute within him, who loses his head on the edge of the precipice over which the girl is going to fall, is as contemptible as any man who breaks open a lock, or as any rascal on the lookout for a house left defenseless and without protection, or as any adventurer looking for some easy and profitable stroke of business, or as that thief whose various exploits you have just related to us.

"I, for my part, utterly refuse to absolve him even when extenuating circumstances plead in his favor, even when he is carrying on a dangerous flirtation, in which a man tries in vain to keep his balance and not to exceed the limits of the game any more than at lawn tennis, even when the parts are reversed and a man's adversary is some precocious, curious, seductive girl, who shows you immediately that she has nothing to learn and nothing to experience, except the last chapter of love—one of those girls from whom may fate always preserve our sons, and whom a psychological novel writer has christened 'Demi-Virgins.'

"It is of course difficult and painful for that coarse and unfathomable vanity which is characteristic of every man, and which might be called malism, not to stir such a charming fire, to act the Joseph and the fool, to turn away his eyes, and, as it were, to put wax into his ears, as did the companions of Ulysses when attracted by the divine, seductive songs of the Sirens. It is hard not to touch that pretty table, covered with a perfectly new cloth, at which you are invited to take a seat before anyone else, in such a

suggestive voice, and are requested to quench your thirst and to taste that new wine whose fresh and strange flavor you will never forget. But who would hesitate to exercise such self-restraint if, when he rapidly examines his conscience in one of those instinctive moments of reason in which a man thinks clearly and recovers his head—if he were to measure the gravity of the fault, think of the error, think of its consequences, of the reprisals, of the uneasiness which he would always feel in the future, and which would destroy the repose and the happiness of his life?

"You may guess that behind all these moral reflections, such as a gray-beard like myself may indulge in, there is a story hidden, and sad as it is, I am sure it will interest you on account of the strange heroism that it shows."

He was silent for a few moments as if to classify his recollections, and with elbows resting on the arms of his easy-chair, and eyes looking into space, he continued in the slow voice of a hospital professor, who is explaining a case to his class of students, at a bedside:

"He was one of those men who as our grandfathers used to say, never met with a cruel woman, the type of an adventurous knight who was always foraging, who had something of the scamp about him, but who despised danger and was bold even to rashness. He was ardent in the pursuit of pleasure, had an irresistible charm about him, and was one of those men in whom we excuse the greatest excesses as the most natural things in the world. He had run through all his money through

gambling and with pretty girls, and so became, as it were, a soldier of fortune, who amused himself whenever and however he could, and was at that time quartered at Versailles.

"I knew him to the very depths of his childish heart, which was only too easily penetrated and sounded. I loved him like some old bachelor uncle loves a nephew who plays him tricks, but who knows how to make him indulgent, and how to wheedle him. He had made me his confidant far more than his adviser, kept me informed of his slightest tricks, though he always pretended to be speaking about one of his friends, and not about himself, and I must confess that his youthful impetuosity, his careless gaiety, and his amorous ardor sometimes distracted my thoughts and made me envy the handsome, vigorous young fellow who was so happy in being alive. I had not the courage to check him, to show him his right road, and to call out to him 'Take care!' as children do at blindman's buff.

"And one day, after one of those interminable cotillons, where the couples do not leave each other for hours, but have a loose rein and can disappear together without anybody noticing it, the poor fellow at last discovered what love was, that real love which takes up its abode in the very center of the heart and in the brain, and is proud of being there, which rules like a sovereign and a tyrannous master. He grew desperately enamored of a pretty, but badly brought up girl, who was as disquieting and as wayward as she was pretty.

"She loved him, however, or rather she idolized him despotically, madly, with all her enraptured soul,

and all her excited person. Left to do as she pleased by imprudent and frivolous parents, suffering from neurosis, in consequence of the unwholesome friendships contracted at the convent-school, instructed by what she saw and heard and knew was going on around her, in spite of her deceitful and artificial conduct, knowing that neither her father nor her mother, who were very proud of their race as well as avaricious, would ever agree to let her marry the man whom she had taken a liking to, —that handsome fellow who had little besides visionary ideas and debts, and who belonged to the middle classes,—she laid aside all scruples, thought of nothing but of belonging to him altogether, of taking him for her lover, and of triumphing over his desperate resistance as an honorable man.

"By degrees, the unfortunate man's strength gave way, his heart grew softened, his nerves became excited, and he allowed himself to be carried away by the current which buffeted him, surrounded him, and left him on the shore like a waif and a stray.

"They wrote letters full of temptation and of madness to each other, and not a day passed without their meeting, either accidentally, as it seemed, or at parties and balls. She had given him her lips in long, ardent caresses, and she had sealed their compact of mutual passion with kisses of desire and of hope. And at last she brought him to her room, almost in spite of himself."

The doctor stopped, and his eyes suddenly filled with tears, as these former troubles came back to his mind. Then in a hoarse voice, he went on, full of the horror of what he was going to relate:

"Each night, for months, he scaled the garden wall, and holding his breath and listening for the slightest noise, like a burglar who is going to break into a house, he entered by the servants' door, which she had left open, went barefoot down a long passage and up the broad staircase, which creaked occasionally, to the second story, where his mistress's room was, and stopped there nearly the whole night.

"One night, when it was darker than usual, and he was hurrying lest he should be later than the time agreed on, the officer knocked up against a piece of furniture in the anteroom and upset it. It so happened that the girl's mother had not gone to sleep yet, either because she had a sick headache, or else because she had sat up late over some novel. Frightened at the unusual noise, which disturbed the silence of the house, she jumped out of bed, opened the door, saw some one indistinctly running away and keeping close to the wall, and, immediately thinking that there were burglars in the house, she aroused her husband and the servants by her frantic screams. The unfortunate man knew what he was about, and seeing his dilemma he determined to be taken for a common thief rather than dishonor his adored mistress and betray the secret of their guilty love. So he ran into the drawing-room, felt on the tables and whatnots, filled his pockets at random with valuable knickknacks, and then cowered down behind the grand piano, which barred up a corner of a large room.

"The servants, who had run in with lighted candles, found him, and overwhelming him with abuse, seized him by the collar and dragged him, panting

and half dead with shame and terror, to the nearest police station. He defended himself with intentional awkwardness when he was brought up for trial, kept up his part with the most perfect self-possession, and without any signs of the despair and anguish that he felt in his heart. Condemned and degraded and made to suffer martyrdom in his honor as a man and as a soldier, he did not protest, but went to prison as one of those criminals whom society destroys like noxious vermin.

"He died there of misery and of bitterness of spirit, with the name of the fair-haired idol for whom he had sacrificed himself on his lips, as if it had been an ecstatic prayer. He intrusted his will to the priest who administered extreme unction to him, and requested him to give it to me. In it, without mentioning anybody, and without in the least lifting the veil, he at last explained the enigma, and cleared himself of those accusations, the terrible burden of which he had borne until his last breath.

"I have always thought myself, though I do not know why, that the girl married and had several charming children, whom she brought up with austere strictness, and in the serious piety of former days!"

THE DIARY OF A MADMAN

He was dead—the head of a high tribunal, the upright magistrate, whose irreproachable life was a proverb in all the courts of France. Advocates, young counselors, judges had saluted, bowing low in token of profound respect, remembering that grand face, pale and thin, illumined by two bright, deep-set eyes.

He had passed his life in pursuing crime and in protecting the weak. Swindlers and murderers had no more redoubtable enemy, for he seemed to read in the recesses of their souls their most secret thoughts.

He was dead, now, at the age of eighty-two, honored by the homage and followed by the regrets of a whole people. Soldiers in red breeches had escorted him to the tomb, and men in white cravats had shed on his grave tears that seemed to be real.

But listen to the strange paper found by the dismayed notary in the desk where the judge had

kept filed the records of great criminals! It was entitled:

WHY?

June 20, 1851. I have just left court. I have condemned Blondel to death! Now, why did this man kill his five children? Frequently one meets with people to whom killing is a pleasure. Yes, yes, it should be a pleasure—the greatest of all, perhaps, for is not killing most like creating? To make and to destroy! These two words contain the history of the universe, the history of all worlds, all that is, all! Why is it not intoxicating to kill?

June 25. To think that there is a being who lives, who walks, who runs. A being? What is a being? An animated thing which bears in it the principle of motion, and a will ruling that principle. It clings to nothing, this thing. Its feet are independent of the ground. It is a grain of life that moves on the earth, and this grain of life, coming I know not whence, one can destroy at one's will. Then nothing —nothing more. It perishes; it is finished.

June 26. Why, then, is it a crime to kill? Yes, why? On the contrary, it is the law of nature. Every being has the mission to kill; he kills to live, and he lives to kill. The beast kills without ceasing, all day, every instant of its existence. Man kills without ceasing, to nourish himself; but since in addition he needs to kill for pleasure, he has invented the chase! The child kills the insects he finds, the little birds, all the little animals that come in his way. But this does not suffice for the irresistible need of massacre that is in us. It is not enough to

kill beasts; we must kill man too. Long ago this need was satisfied by human sacrifice. Now, the necessity of living in society has made murder a crime. We condemn and punish the assassin! But as we cannot live without yielding to this natural and imperious instinct of death, we relieve ourselves, from time to time, by wars. Then a whole nation slaughters another nation. It is a feast of blood, a feast that maddens armies and intoxicates the civilians, women and children, who read, by lamplight at night, the feverish story of massacre.

And do we despise those picked out to accomplish these butcheries of men? No, they are loaded with honors. They are clad in gold and in resplendent stuffs; they wear plumes on their heads and ornaments on their breasts; and they are given crosses, rewards, titles of every kind. They are proud, respected, loved by women, cheered by the crowd, solely because their mission is to shed human blood! They drag through the streets their instruments of death, and the passer-by, clad in black, looks on with envy. For to kill is the great law put by nature in the heart of existence! There is nothing more beautiful and honorable than killing!

June 30. To kill is the law, because Nature loves eternal youth. She seems to cry in all her unconscious acts: "Quick! quick! quick!" The more she destroys, the more she renews herself.

July 3. It must be a pleasure, unique and full of zest, to kill: to place before you a living, thinking being; to make therein a little hole, nothing but a little hole, and to see that red liquid flow which is the blood, which is the life; and then to have before

you only a heap of limp flesh, cold, inert, void of thought!

August 5. I, who have passed my life in judging, condemning, killing by words pronounced, killing by the guillotine those who had killed by the knife, if I should do as all the assassins whom I have smitten have done, I, I—who would know it?

August 10. Who would ever know? Who would ever suspect me, especially if I should choose a being I had no interest in doing away with?

August 22. I could resist no longer. I have killed a little creature as an experiment, as a beginning. Jean, my servant, had a goldfinch in a cage hung in the office window. I sent him on an errand, and I took the little bird in my hand, in my hand where I felt its heart beat. It was warm. I went up to my room. From time to time I squeezed it tighter; its heart beat faster; it was atrocious and delicious. I was nearly choking it. But I could not see the blood.

Then I took scissors, short nail scissors, and I cut its throat in three strokes, quite gently. It opened its bill, it struggled to escape me, but I held it, oh! I held it—I could have held a mad dog—and I saw the blood trickle.

And then I did as assassins do—real ones. I washed the scissors and washed my hands. I sprinkled water, and took the body, the corpse, to the garden to hide it. I buried it under a strawberry-plant. It will never be found. Every day I can eat a strawberry from that plant. How one can enjoy life, when one knows how!

My servant cried; he thought his bird flown. How could he suspect me? Ah!

August 25. I must kill a man! I must!

August 30. It is done. But what a little thing! I had gone for a walk in the forest of Vernes. I was thinking of nothing, literally nothing. See! a child on the road, a little child eating a slice of bread and butter. He stops to see me pass and says, "Good day, Mr. President."

And the thought enters my head: "Shall I kill him?"

I answer: "You are alone, my boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"All alone in the wood?"

"Yes, sir."

The wish to kill him intoxicated me like wine. I approached him quite softly, persuaded that he was going to run away. And suddenly I seized him by the throat. He held my wrists in his little hands, and his body writhed like a feather on the fire. Then he moved no more. I threw the body in the ditch, then some weeds on top of it. I returned home and dined well. What a little thing it was! In the evening I was very gay, light, rejuvenated, and passed the evening at the Prefect's. They found me witty. But I have not seen blood! I am not tranquil.

August 31. The body has been discovered. They are hunting for the assassin. Ah!

September 1. Two tramps have been arrested. Proofs are lacking.

September 2. The parents have been to see me. They wept! Ah!

October 6. Nothing has been discovered. Some strolling vagabond must have done the deed. Ah!

If I had seen the blood flow it seems to me I should be tranquil now!

October 10. Yet another. I was walking by the river, after breakfast. And I saw, under a willow, a fisherman asleep. It was noon. A spade, as if expressly put there for me, was standing in a potato-field near by.

I took it. I returned; I raised it like a club, and with one blow of the edge I cleft the fisherman's head. Oh! he bled, this one!—rose-colored blood. It flowed into the water quite gently. And I went away with a grave step. If I had been seen! Ah! I should have made an excellent assassin.

October 25. The affair of the fisherman makes a great noise. His nephew, who fished with him, is charged with the murder.

October 26. The examining magistrate affirms that the nephew is guilty. Everybody in town believes it. Ah! ah!

October 27. The nephew defends himself badly. He had gone to the village to buy bread and cheese, he declares. He swears that his uncle had been killed in his absence! Who would believe him?

October 28. The nephew has all but confessed, so much have they made him lose his head! Ah! Justice!

November 15. There are overwhelming proofs against the nephew, who was his uncle's heir. I shall preside at the sessions.

January 25, 1852. To death! to death! to death! I have had him condemned to death! The advocate-general spoke like an angel! Ah! Yet another! I shall go to see him executed!

March 10. It is done. They guillotined him this morning. He died very well! very well! That gave me pleasure! How fine it is to see a man's head cut off!

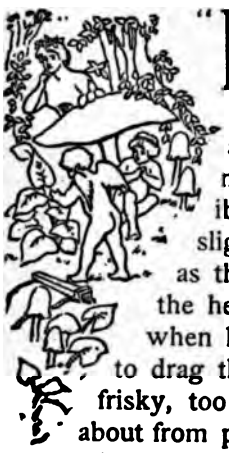
Now, I shall wait, I can wait. It would take such a little thing to let myself be caught.

* * * * * * *

The manuscript contained more pages, but told of no new crime.

Alienist physicians to whom the awful story has been submitted declare that there are in the world many unknown madmen, as adroit and as terrible as this monstrous lunatic.

IN FLAGRANTE DELICTU



"It is certain," Sulpice de Laurier said, "that I had absolutely forgotten the date on which I was to allow myself to be taken in the very act, with a mistress for the occasion. As neither my wife nor I had any serious or plausible reason for a divorce, not even the slightest incompatibility of temper, and as there is always a risk of not softening the heart of even the most indulgent judge when he is told that the parties have agreed to drag their load separately, that they are too frisky, too fond of pleasure and of wandering about from place to place to continue the conjugal experiment, we got up between us the ingenious stage arrangement of 'a serious wrong!'

"This was funnier than the usual thing, and under any other circumstances it would have been repugnant to me to mix up our servants in the affair, like so many do, or to distress that pretty and delicate little Parisian woman, even though it were only in appearance and to pass as a common *Sganarelle* with

the manners of a carter, in the eyes of some scoundrel of a footman, or of some lady's maid. And so when Maître de Chevrier, who certainly knows more female secrets than the most fashionable confessor, gave a startled exclamation on seeing me still in my dressing-gown, and slowly smoking a cigar, like an idler who has no engagements down on his tablets, and is quietly waiting for the usual time to dress for dinner at his club, he exclaimed:

"'Have you forgotten that this is the day, at the Hôtel de Bade, between five and six o'clock? In an hour, Madame de Laurier will be at the office of the Police Commissary in the Rue de Provence, with her uncle and Maître Cantenac.'

"An hour; I only had an hour, sixty short minutes in which to dress, take a room, find a woman and persuade her to go with me immediately, and excite her feelings, so that this extravagant adventure might not appear too equivocal to the Commissary of Police. One hour in which to carry out such a programme was enough to make a man lose his head. And there was no possible way of putting off that obligatory entertainment, of letting Madame de Laurier know in time, and of gaining a few minutes more.

"'Have you found a woman, at any rate?' Maître de Chevrier asked anxiously.

"'No, my dear sir!'

"I immediately began to think of the whole string of my dear female friends. Should I choose Liline Ablette, who could refuse me nothing, Blanch Rebus, who was the best comrade a man ever had, or Lalie Spring, that luxurious creature, who was constantly in search of something new? Neither one nor the

other of them, for it was ninety-nine chances to one that all these confounded girls were in the Bois de Boulogne, or at their dressmaker's!

"'Bah! Just pick up the first girl you meet on the pavement.'

"And before the hour was up, I was bolting the door of a room, which looked out on to the boulevard.

"The woman whom I had picked up, as she was walking past the *cafés*, from the Vaudeville to Tortoni's, was twenty at the most. She had an impudent, snub nose, as if it had been turned up in fun by a fillip, and large eyes with deep rims round them. Her lips were too red, and she had the slow, indolent walk of a girl who leads a very fast life and who began too soon. But she was pretty, and her linen was very clean and neat. She was evidently used to chance love-making, for she had a way of undressing herself in two or three rapid movements—of throwing her toggery to the right and left, until she was extremely lightly clad, and of throwing herself on to the bed—which astonished me.

"She did not talk much, though she began by saying: 'Pay up at once, old man.'

"I gave her two napoleons, and she eyed me with gratitude and respect at the same time, but also with an uneasy look.

"The whole affair began to amuse me, and I must confess that I was rather taken with her, for she had a beautiful figure and complexion. I was hoping that the Commissary would not come directly, when there was a loud rapping at the door.

"She sat up with a start, and grew so pale that one would have said she was about to faint.

"'What a set of pigs, to come and interrupt people like this!' she muttered between her teeth; while I affected the most complete calm.

"'Somebody who has made a mistake in the room, my dear,' I said.

"But the noise increased, and suddenly I heard a man's voice saying clearly and authoritatively:

"'Open the door, in the name of the law!'

"On hearing this, you would have thought that she had received a shock from an electric battery, by the nimble manner in which she jumped out of bed. Quickly putting on her stays and her dress, she endeavored to find a way out in every corner of the room, like a wild beast trying to escape from its cage. I thought she was going to throw herself out of the window, so I seized hold of her to prevent her.

"The unfortunate creature acted like a madwoman, and when she felt my arm round her waist, she cried in a hoarse voice:

"'I see it. You have sold me. You thought that I should betray myself. Oh! you filthy brutes—you filthy brutes!'

"And suddenly, passing from abuse to entreaties, pale and with chattering teeth, she threw herself at my feet, and said in a low voice:

"'Listen to me, my dear: you don't look a bad sort of fellow, and you would not like them to lock me up. I have a child and a mother to keep. Hide me behind the bed, do, and please don't give me up. I will make it up to you, and you shall have no cause for grumbling.'

"At that moment, however, the lock which they had unscrewed, fell on to the floor with a metallic

sound, and Madame de Laurier and the Police Commissary, the latter wearing his tricolored scarf, appeared in the door, while behind them the heads of the uncle and of the lawyer could be seen in the back-ground.

"The girl uttered a cry of terror, and, going up to the Commissary, she said, panting:

"'I swear to you that I am not guilty, that I was not. I will tell you everything if you will promise not to tell them that I confessed, for they would pay me out—'

"The Commissary, who was surprised, but who guessed that there was something which was not quite clear behind all this, forgot to draw up his report, and so the lawyer went up to him and said:

"'Well, Monsieur, what are we waiting for?'

"But he paid no attention to anything but the woman, and looking at her sharply and suspiciously through his gold-rimmed spectacles, he said to her in a hard voice:

"'Your names and surname?'

"'Juliette Randal, or as I am generally called, "Jujutte Pipehead."'

"'So you will swear that you were not—'

"She interrupted him eagerly:

"'I swear it, Monsieur, and I know that my little man had nothing to do with it either. He was only keeping a lookout while the others collared the swag. I will swear that I can account for every moment of my time that night. Roquin was drunk, and told me everything. They got five thousand francs from daddy Zacharias, and of course Roquin had his share, but he did not work with his partners. It was

Minon Ménilmuche, whom they call "Drink-without-Thirst," who held the gardener's hands, and who killed him with a stab from his knife.'

"The Commissary let her run on, and when she had finished, he questioned me, as if I had belonged to Jujutte's band.

"'Your name, Christian name, and profession?'

"'Marquis Sulpice de Laurier, living on my own private income, at 24, Rue de Galilee.'

"'De Laurier? Oh, very well. Excuse me, Monsieur, but at Madame de Laurier's request, I declare formally before these gentlemen, who will be able to give evidence, that the girl Juliette Randal, whom they call Jujutte Tête-de-Pipe, is your mistress. You are at liberty to go, Monsieur le Marquis, and you, girl Randal, answer my questions.'

"Thus, by the most extraordinary chance, our divorce suit created a sensation which I had certainly never foreseen. I was obliged to appear in the Assize Court as a witness in the celebrated case of those burglars, when three of them were condemned to death, and to undergo the questioning of the idiotic presiding Judge, who tried by all means in his power to make me acknowledge that I was Jujutte Tête-de-Pipe's regular lover; and in consequence, ever since then I have passed as an ardent seeker after novel sensations, a man who wallows in the lowest depths of the Parisian dunghill.

"I cannot say that this unjust reputation has brought me any pleasant love affairs. Women are so perverse, so absurd, and so curious!"

ON PERFUMES

THREE ladies belonging to that class of society which has nothing useful to do, and therefore cannot employ its time sensibly, were sitting on a bench in the shade of some pine-trees at Ischl, and talking incidentally on the subject of perfumes.

One of the ladies, Princess F——, a slim, handsome brunette, declared there was nothing like the smell of Russia leather; she wore dull brown Russia leather boots, a Russia leather dress suspender, to keep her petticoats out of the dirt and dust, a Russia leather belt which spanned her wasplike waist, and carried a Russia leather purse. She even wore a brooch and bracelet of gilt Russia leather; people declared that her bedroom was papered with Russia leather, and that her *cicisbeo* was obliged to wear high Russia leather boots and tight breeches, but that, on the other hand, her husband was excused from wearing anything at all in Russia leather.

Countess H——, a very stout lady, who had for-

merly been very beautiful and of a very loving nature, but loving, after the fashion of her time, *à la* Parthenia and Griselda, could not get over the vulgar taste of the young Princess. All she cared for was the smell of hay, and she it was who brought the perfume New Mown Hay into fashion. Her ideal was a freshly mown field in the moonlight, and when she rolled slowly along, she looked like a moving haystack, and exhaled an odor of hay around her.

The third lady's taste was even more peculiar than Countess H——'s, and more vulgar than the Princess's, for the small, delicate, light-haired Countess W——, lived only for—the smell of stables. Her friends could not understand this at all; the Princess raised her beautiful, full arm with its broad bracelet to her Grecian nose and inhaled the sweet smell of the Russia leather, while the sentimental hayrick exclaimed over and over again:

"How dreadful! What dost thou say to it, chaste moon?"

The delicate little Countess seemed very much embarrassed at the effect made by her confession, and tried to justify her taste.

"Prince T—— told me that that smell had quite bewitched him once," she said. "It was in a Jewish town in Galicia, where he was quartered once with his hussar regiment, and a number of poor, ragged circus riders, with half-starved horses, came from Russia and put up a circus with a few poles and some rags of canvas. The Prince went to see them, and found a woman among them, who was neither young nor beautiful, but bold and impudent. She wore a faded, bright red jacket trimmed with old, shabby

imitation ermine, which reeked of the stable, as the Prince expressed it. But she bewitched him with the odor, so that every time that the shameless wretch visited him, smelling abominably of the stable, he felt as if he were mesmerized."

"How disgusting!" both the other ladies said, and involuntarily held their noses.

"What dost thou say to it, chaste moon?" the haystack said with a sigh, and the little light-haired Countess was abashed, and held her tongue.

At the beginning of the winter season the three friends were together again in the gay, imperial city on the blue Danube. One morning the Princess accidentally met the enthusiast for hay at the house of the little, light-haired Countess, and was obliged to follow the latter to her private riding-school, where she was taking her daily lesson. As soon as she saw them, she came up, and beckoned her riding-master to her to help her out of the saddle. He was a young man of extremely good and athletic build, which was set off by tight breeches and a short, velvet coat. He ran up and took his lovely burden into his arms with visible pleasure, to help her off the quiet, perfectly broken horse.

When the ladies saw the handsome, vigorous man, it was quite enough to explain their little friend's predilection for the smell of a stable. When the latter saw their looks, she blushed up to the roots of her hair, and thought her only way out of the difficulty was to order the riding-master, in a very authoritative manner, to take the horse back to the stable. He merely bowed, with an indescribable smile, and obeyed her.

A few months afterward, Viennese society was alarmed at the news that Countess W —— had been divorced from her husband. The event was unexpected, as they had apparently always lived very happily together, and gossip was unable to mention any man on whom she had bestowed even the most passing attention, beyond the requirements of politeness.

Long afterward, however, a strange report became current. A chattering lady's maid declared that the handsome riding-master had once so far forgotten himself as to strike the Countess with his riding-whip. A groom had told the Count of the occurrence, and when the latter called the insolent fellow to account for it, the Countess covered him with her own body, and thus gave occasion for the divorce.

Years had passed since then and the Countess H —— had grown stouter and more sentimental. Ischl and hayricks were not enough for her any longer; she spent the winter on lovely Lago Maggiore, where she walked among laurel bushes and cypress-trees, and was rowed about on the warm, moonlight nights.

One evening she was returning home from Isola Bella, in the company of an English lady who was also a great lover of nature, when they met a beautiful private boat in which a very unusual couple were sitting—a small, delicate, light-haired woman, wrapped in a white burnoose, and a handsome, athletic man, in tight, white breeches, a short, black velvet coat trimmed with sable, a red fez on his head, and a riding-whip in his hand.

Countess H—— involuntarily uttered a loud exclamation.

"What is the matter with you?" the English lady asked. "Do you know those people?"

"Certainly! She is a Viennese lady," Countess H—— whispered; "Countess W——."

"Oh! Indeed you are quite mistaken; it is a Count Savelli and his wife. They are a handsome couple, don't you think so?"

When the boat came nearer, Countess H—— saw that it was little Countess W——, and that the handsome man was her former riding-master, whom she had married, and for whom she had bought a title from the Pope*; and as the two boats passed each other, the short sable cloak, which was thrown carelessly over his shoulders, exhaled, like the old cat's skin jacket of the female circus rider, a strong stable perfume.

* Frequently done formerly, and not unknown even now.

THE WILL

I KNEW that tall young fellow, René de Bourneval. He was an agreeable man, though of a rather melancholy turn of mind, and prejudiced against everything, very skeptical, and fond of tearing worldly hypocrisies to pieces. He often used to say:

"There are no honorable men, or, at any rate, they only appear so when compared to low people."

He had two brothers, whom he shunned, the Messieurs de Courcils. I thought they were by another father, on account of the difference in the name. I had frequently heard that something strange had happened in the family, but I did not know the details.

As I took a great liking to him, we soon became intimate, and one evening, when I had been dining with him alone, I asked him by chance: "Are you by your mother's first or second marriage?" He grew rather pale; then he flushed, and did not speak for a few moments; he was visibly embarrassed.

Then he smiled in that melancholy and gentle manner peculiar to him, and said:

"My dear friend, if it will not weary you, I can give you some very strange particulars about my life. I know you to be a sensible man, so I do not fear that our friendship will suffer by my revelations, and should it suffer, I should not care about having you for my friend any longer.

"My mother, Madame de Courcils, was a poor, little, timid woman, whom her husband had married for the sake of her fortune. Her whole life was a continual martyrdom. Of a loving, delicate mind, she was constantly ill-treated by the man who ought to have been my father, one of those boors called country gentlemen. A month after their marriage he was living with a servant, and besides that, the wives and daughters of his tenants were his mistresses, which did not prevent him from having three children by his wife, that is, if you count me in. My mother said nothing, and lived in that noisy house like a little mouse. Set aside, disparaged, nervous, she looked at people with bright, uneasy, restless eyes, the eyes of some terrified creature which can never shake off its fear. And yet she was pretty, very pretty and fair, a gray blonde, as if her hair had lost its color through her constant fears.

"Among Monsieur de Courcils's friends who constantly came to the château there was an ex-cavalry officer, a widower, a man to be feared, a man at the same time tender and violent, and capable of the most energetic resolution, Monsieur de Bourneval, whose name I bear. He was a tall, thin man, with a heavy black mustache, and I am very like him. He was a man who had read a great deal, and whose ideas

were not like those of most of his class. His great-grandmother had been a friend of J. J. Rousseau, and you might have said that he had inherited something of this ancestral connection. He knew the "Contrat Social" and the "Nouvelle Héloïse" by heart, and, indeed, all those philosophical books which led the way to the overthrow of our old usages, prejudices, superannuated laws, and imbecile morality.

"It seems that he loved my mother, and she loved him, but their intrigue was carried on so secretly that no one guessed it. The poor, neglected, unhappy woman must have clung to him in a despairing manner, and in her intimacy with him must have imbibed all his ways of thinking, theories of free thought, audacious ideas of independent love. But as she was so timid that she never ventured to speak aloud, it was all driven back, condensed, and expressed in her heart, which never opened itself.

"My two brothers were very cruel to her, like their father, and never gave her a caress. Used to seeing her count for nothing in the house, they treated her rather like a servant, and so I was the only one of her sons who really loved her, and whom she loved.

"When she died I was seventeen, and I must add, in order that you may understand what follows, that there had been a lawsuit between my father and my mother. Their property had been separated, to my mother's advantage, as, thanks to the workings of the law and the intelligent devotion of a lawyer to her interests, she had preserved the right to make her will in favor of anyone she pleased.

"We were told that there was a will lying at the lawyer's, and were invited to be present at the read-

ing of it. I can remember it, as if it were yesterday. It was a grand, dramatic, yet burlesque and surprising scene, brought about by the posthumous revolt of a dead woman, by a cry for liberty from the depths of her tomb, on the part of a martyred woman who had been crushed by a man's habits during her life, and, who, from her grave, uttered a despairing appeal for independence.

"The man who thought that he was my father, a stout, ruddy-faced man, who gave you the idea of a butcher, and my brothers, two great fellows of twenty and twenty-two, were waiting quietly in their chairs. Monsieur de Bourneval, who had been invited to be present, came in and stood behind me. He was very pale, and bit his mustache, which was turning gray. No doubt he was prepared for what was going to happen. The lawyer, after opening the envelope in our presence, double-locked the door and began to read the will, which was sealed with red wax, and the contents of which he knew not."

My friend stopped suddenly and got up, and from his writing-table took an old paper, unfolded it, kissed it and then continued:

"This is the will of my beloved mother:

"I, the undersigned, Anne-Catherine-Geneviève-Mathilde de Croix-luce, the legitimate wife of Léopold-Joseph Gontran de Courcils, sound in body and mind, here express my last wishes:

"I first of all ask God, and then my dear son René, to pardon me for the act I am about to commit. I believe that my child's heart is great enough to understand me, and to forgive me. I have suffered my whole life long. I was married out of calculation, then despised, misunderstood, oppressed, and constantly deceived by my husband.

"I forgive him, but I owe him nothing.

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[illegible] ORIGINAL DRAWING BY LUCIEN BARBUT.

"I thought they were about to assault each other."

"My eldest sons never loved me, never caressed me, scarcely treated me as a mother, but during my whole life I was everything that I ought to have been, and I owe them nothing more after my death. The ties of blood cannot exist without daily and constant affection. An ungrateful son is less than a stranger; he is a culprit, for he has no right to be indifferent toward his mother.

"I have always trembled before men, before their unjust laws, their inhuman customs, their shameful prejudices. Before God, I have no longer any fear. Dead, I fling aside disgraceful hypocrisy; I dare to speak my thoughts, and to avow and to sign the secret of my heart.

"I therefore leave that part of my fortune of which the law allows me to dispose, as a deposit with my dear lover Pierre-Gennes-Simon de Bourneval, to revert afterward to our dear son René.

"(This wish is, moreover, formulated more precisely in a notarial deed.)

"And I declare before the Supreme Judge who hears me, that I should have cursed Heaven and my own existence, if I had not met my lover's deep, devoted, tender, unshaken affection, if I had not felt in his arms that the Creator made His creatures to love, sustain, and console each other, and to weep together in the hours of sadness.

"Monsieur de Courcils is the father of my two eldest sons; René alone owes his life to Monsieur de Bourneval. I pray to the Master of men and of their destinies to place father and son above social prejudices, to make them love each other until they die, and to love me also in my coffin.

"These are my last thoughts, and my last wish.

"MATHILDE DE CROIXLUCE.

"Monsieur de Courcils had risen, and he cried:

"'It is the will of a mad woman.'

"Then Monsieur de Bourneval stepped forward and said in a loud and penetrating voice: 'I, Simon de Bourneval, solemnly declare that this writing contains nothing but the strict truth, and I am ready to prove it by letters which I possess.'

"On hearing that, Monsieur de Courcils went up to him, and I thought that they were going to collar each other. There they stood, both of them tall, one

stout and the other thin, both trembling. My mother's husband stammered out:

"'You are a worthless wretch!'

"And the other replied in a loud, dry voice:

"'We will meet somewhere else, Monsieur. I should have already slapped your ugly face, and challenged you a long time ago, if I had not, before all else, thought of the peace of mind of that poor woman whom you made to suffer so much during her lifetime.'

"Then, turning to me, he said:

"'You are my son; will you come with me? I have no right to take you away, but I shall assume it, if you will allow me.' I shook his hand without replying, and we went out together; I was certainly three parts mad.

"Two days later Monsieur de Bourneval killed Monsieur de Courcils in a duel. My brothers, fearing some terrible scandal, held their tongues. I offered them, and they accepted, half the fortune which my mother had left me. I took my real father's name, renouncing that which the law gave me, but which was not really mine. Monsieur de Bourneval died three years afterward, and I have not consoled myself yet."

He rose from his chair, walked up and down the room, and, standing in front of me, said:

"I maintain that my mother's will was one of the most beautiful and loyal, as well as one of the grandest, acts that a woman could perform. Do you not think so?"

I gave him both my hands:

"Most certainly I do, my friend."

IN HIS SWEETHEART'S LIVERY

AT PRESENT she is a great lady, an elegant, intellectual woman, and a celebrated actress. But in the year 1847, when our story begins, she was a beautiful, but not very moral girl, and then it was that the young, talented Hungarian poet who was the first to discover her gifts for the stage made her acquaintance.

The slim, ardent girl, with her bright brown hair and her large blue eyes, attracted the careless poet. He loved her, and all that was good and noble in her nature put forth fresh buds and blossoms in the sunshine of his poetic love.

They lived in an attic in the old imperial city on the Danube; she shared his poverty, his triumphs, and his pleasures, and would have become his true and faithful wife, if the Hungarian revolution had not torn him from her arms.

The poet became the soldier of freedom. He followed the Magyar tricolor, and the Honved drums,

while she was carried away by the current of the movement in the capital, and might have been seen discharging her musket, like a brave Amazon, at the Croats who were defending the town against Görgey's assaulting battalions.

But at last Hungary was subdued, and was governed as if it had been a conquered country.

It was said that the young poet had fallen at Temesvar. His mistress wept for him, and married another man, which was nothing either new or extraordinary. Her name was now Frau von Kubinyi, but her married life was not happy. One day she remembered that her lover had told her that she had talent for the stage, and as whatever he said had always proved correct, she separated from her husband, studied a few parts, appeared on the stage, and lo! the public, the critics, actors, and writers were lying at her feet.

She obtained a very profitable engagement, and her reputation increased with every part she played. Before the end of a year after her first appearance, she was the lioness of society. Everybody paid homage to her, and the wealthiest men tried to obtain her favors. But she remained cold and reserved, until the General commanding the district, who was a handsome man, of noble bearing, and a gentleman in the highest sense of the word, approached her.

Whether she was flattered at seeing that powerful man—before whom millions trembled, who had power over the life and death, the honor and happiness of so many thousands—fettered by her soft curls, or whether her enigmatical heart for once really

felt what true love was, suffice it to say that in a short time she was his acknowledged mistress, and her princely lover surrounded her with the luxury of an Eastern queen.

But just then a miracle occurred—the resurrection of a dead man. Frau von Kubinyi was driving through the Corso in the General's carriage; she was lying back negligently in the soft cushions, and looking carelessly at the crowd on the pavement. Then—she caught sight of a common Austrian soldier and screamed aloud.

Nobody heard that cry, which came from the depths of a woman's heart, nobody saw how pale and how excited that woman was, who usually seemed made of marble, not even the soldier who was the cause of it. He was a Hungarian poet, who, like so many other Honveds,* now wore the uniform of an Austrian soldier.

Two days later, to the poet's no small surprise, he was told to go to the General in command as orderly. When he reported himself to the adjutant, he told him to go to Frau von Kubinyi's, and to await her orders.

Our poet only knew her by report, but he hated and despised intensely the beautiful woman who had sold herself to the enemy of his country; he had no choice, however, but to obey.

When he arrived at her house, he seemed to be expected, for the porter knew his name, took him into his lodge, and without any further explanation, told

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*A Hungarian word meaning Defender of the Fatherland. The term *Honved* is applied to the Hungarian *Landwehr*, or militia.

him immediately to put on the livery of his mistress, which was lying there ready for him. He ground his teeth, but resigned himself without a word to his wretched though laughable fate; it was quite clear that the actress had some purpose in making the poet wear her livery. He tried to remember whether he could formerly have offended her by his notices as a theatrical critic, but before he could arrive at any conclusion, he was told to present himself to Frau von Kubinyi. She evidently wished to enjoy his humiliation.

He was shown into a small drawing-room, which was furnished with an amount of taste and magnificence such as he had never seen before, and was told to wait. But he had not been alone many minutes, before the door-curtains were parted and Frau von Kubinyi came in, calm but deadly pale, in a splendid dressing-gown of some Turkish material, and he recognized his former mistress.

"Irma!" he exclaimed.

The cry came from his heart, and affected the heart of this pleasure-surfeited woman so greatly that the next moment she was lying on the breast of the man whom she had believed to be dead, but only for a moment, for he freed himself from her.

"We are fated to meet again thus!" she began.

"Not through any fault of mine," he replied bitterly.

"And not through mine either," she said quickly; "everybody thought that you were dead, and I wept for you; that is my justification."

"You are really too kind," he replied sarcastically. "How can you condescend to make any excuses to

me? I wear your livery; you have to order, and I have to obey; our relative positions are clear enough."

Frau von Kubinyi turned away to hide her tears.

"I did not intend to hurt your feelings," he continued; "but I must confess that it would have been better for both of us, if we had not met again. But what do you mean by making me wear your livery? Is it not enough that I have been robbed of my happiness? Does it afford you any pleasure to humiliate me as well?"

"How can you think that?" the actress exclaimed. "Ever since I discovered your unhappy lot, I have thought of nothing but the means of delivering you from it, and until I succeed in doing this, however, I can at least make it more bearable for you."

"I understand," the unhappy poet said with a sneer. "And in order to do this, you have begged your present worshiper to turn your former lover into a footman."

"What a thing to say to me!"

"Can you find any other pleasure for it? You wish to punish me for having loved you, idolized you, I suppose?" the poet continued. "So exactly like a woman! But I can perfectly well understand that the situation promises to have a fresh charm for you."

Before he could finish what he was saying, the actress quickly left the room; he could hear her sobbing, but he did not regret his words, and his contempt and hatred for her only increased when he saw the extravagance and the princely luxury with which she was surrounded. But what was the use of his indignation? He was wearing her livery, he

was obliged to wait upon her and to obey her, for she had the corporal's cane at her command. It really seemed as if he incurred the vengeance of the offended woman; as if the General's insolent mistress wished to make him feel her whole power; as if he were not to be spared the deepest humiliation.

The General and two of Frau von Kubinyi's friends, who were also servants of the Muses, for one was a ballet dancer and the other an actress, had come to tea, and he was to wait on them.

While it was being made, he heard them laughing in the next room. The blood flew to his head when the butler opened the door and Frau von Kubinyi appeared on the General's arm. She did not, however, look at her new footman, her former lover, triumphantly or contemptuously, but gave him a glance of the deepest commiseration.

Could he, after all, have wronged her?

Hatred and love, contempt and jealousy were struggling in his breast, and when he had to fill the glasses, the bottle shook in his hand.

"Is this the man?" the General said, looking at him closely.

Frau von Kubinyi nodded.

"He was evidently not born for a footman," the General added.

"And still less for a soldier," the actress observed.

These words fell heavily on the unfortunate poet's heart, but she was evidently taking his part, and trying to rescue him from his terrible position.

Suspicion, however, once more gained the day.

"She is tired of all pleasures, and satiated with enjoyment," he said to himself; "she requires excite-

ment and it amuses her to see the man whom she formerly loved, and who, as she knows, still loves her, tremble before her. And when she pleases, she can see me tremble; not for my life, but for fear of the disgrace which she can inflict upon me, at any moment, if it should give her any pleasure."

But suddenly the actress gave him a look, which was so sad and so imploring, that he looked down in confusion.

From that time he remained in her house without performing any duties, and without receiving any orders from her; in fact he never saw her, and did not venture to ask after her. Two months had passed in this way, when the General unexpectedly sent for him. He waited, with many others, in the anteroom. The General came back from parade, saw him, and beckoned him to follow him, and as soon as they were alone, said:

"You are free, as you have been allowed to purchase your discharge."

"Good heavens!" the poet stammered, "how am I to—"

"That is already done," the General replied. "You are free."

"How is it possible? How can I thank your Excellency!"

"You owe me no thanks," he replied; "Frau von Kubinyi bought you out."

The poor poet's heart seemed to stop; he could not speak, nor even stammer a word; but with a low bow, he rushed out and tore wildly through the streets, until he reached the mansion of the woman whom he had so misunderstood, quite out

of breath; he must see her again, and throw himself at her feet.

"Where are you going to?" the porter asked him.

"To Frau von Kubinyi's."

"She is not here."

"Not here?"

"She has gone away."

"Gone away? Where to?"

"She started for Paris two hours ago."

THE CONFESSION

MONSIEUR DE CHAMPDELIN had no reason to complain of his lot as a married man; nor could he accuse destiny of having done him a bad turn, as it does to many others, for it would have been difficult to find a more desirable, merrier, prettier little woman, or one easier to amuse and to guide than his wife. To see the large limpid eyes which illuminated her fair, girlish face, one would think that her mother must have spent whole nights before her birth, dreamily star-gazing, and so had become, as it were, impregnated with their magic brightness. I never knew which to prefer—her bright, silky hair, or her slightly *retroussé* nose, with its vibrating nostrils, or her red lips, which looked as alluring as a ripe peach, or her beautiful shoulders, and delicate ears, which resembled mother-of-pearl, or her slim waist and rounded figure, which would have delighted and tempted a sculptor.

And then she was always merry, overflowing with youth and life, never dissatisfied, only wishing

to enjoy herself, to laugh, to love and be loved, always chirping about the house, as if it were a great bird-cage. In spite of all this, however, that worn-out fool, Champdelin, had never cared much about her. He left that charming garden lying waste, and almost immediately after their honeymoon had resumed his usual bachelor habits, and was leading the same fast life that he had done of old.

Champdelin was one of those libertine natures which are constant targets for love, and which never resign themselves to domestic peace and happiness. The last woman who came across him, in a love adventure, was always the one he loved best, and the mere contact with a petticoat inflamed him, and made him commit the most imprudent actions.

He was not hard to please; he fished, as it were, in troubled waters, went after the ugly ones and the pretty ones alike, was bold even to impudence, was not to be kept off by mistakes, or anger, or modesty, or threats—though he sometimes fell into a trap and got a thrashing from some relative or jealous lover. He withstood all attempts to get hush-money out of him, and became only all the more enamored of vice and more ardent in his pursuit of love affairs on that account.

But the work-girls and the shop-girls and all the tradesmen's wives in Saint Martéjoux knew him. They made him pay for their whims and their coquetry, and put up with his love-making. Many of them smiled or blushed when they saw him under the tall plane-trees in the public garden, or met him in the unfrequented, narrow streets near the Cathedral. His thin, sensual face had something satyr-like

about it, and some of them used to laugh at and make fun of him, though they ran away when he went up to them. And when some friend or other, who was sorry that he could forget himself so far, used to say to him, when he was at a loss for any other argument: "And your wife, Champdelin? Are you not afraid that she will have her revenge and pay you out in your own coin?" his only reply was a contemptuous and incredulous shrug of the shoulders.

She deceive him, indeed; she, who was as devout, as virtuous, and as ignorant of forbidden things as a nun, who cared no more for love than she did for an old slipper! She, who did not even venture on any veiled allusions, who was always laughing, who took life as it came, who performed her religious duties with edifying assiduity, she to pay him back, so as to make him look ridiculous, and compel him to gad about at night! Never! Anyone who could think such a thing must have lost his senses.

However, one summer day, when the roofs all seemed red-hot, and the whole town appeared dead, Monsieur de Champdelin had followed two milliner's girls, with bandboxes in their hands, from street to street, whispering nonsense to them, and promising beforehand to give them anything they asked him for, going after them as far even as the Cathedral. In their fright they took refuge there, but he followed them in, and, emboldened by the solitude of the nave, and by the perfect silence in the building, he became more enterprising and bolder. They did not know how to defend themselves, or to escape from him, and were trembling at his daring attempts, and

at his kisses, when in one of the side chapels he saw a confessional, the door of which was open. "We should be much more comfortable in there, my little dears," he said going into it, as if to get the unexpected nest ready for them.

But they were quicker than he, and, throwing themselves against the grated door, pushed it to before he could turn round, and locked him in. At first he thought it was only a joke, and it amused him; but when they began to laugh heartily, and to put out their tongues at him, as if he had been a monkey in a cage, and to overwhelm him with insults, he first grew angry, and then humble. He offered to pay well for his ransom, and implored them to let him out, struggling to escape from the mouse-trap. They, however, did not listen to him, but naïvely bowed, wished him good night, and ran out as fast as they could.

Champdelin was in despair; he did not know what to do, and cursed his bad luck. What would be the end of it? Who would deliver him from such a prison. Was he going to remain there all the afternoon and night, like a forgotten portmanteau at the lost luggage office? He could not manage to force the lock, and did not venture to knock hard against the sides of the confessional, for fear of attracting the attention of some beadle or sacristan. Oh! those wretched girls! How people would make fun of him, and write verses about him, and point their fingers at him, if the joke were discovered and got noised abroad!

By and by, he heard a faint sound of prayers in the distance, and, through the green serge curtain

that concealed him, the rattle of the beads on the chaplets, as the women repeated their "Ave Marias," the rustle of dresses and the noise of footsteps on the pavement.

Suddenly, Champdelin felt a tickling in his throat that nearly choked him, and he could not altogether prevent himself from coughing. When at last it passed off, the unfortunate man was horrified at hearing some one come into the chapel and up to the confessional. The penitent knelt down, and gave a discreet knock at the grating which separates the priest from his flock, so Champdelin quickly put on the surplice and stole, which were hanging on a nail, and covering his face with his handkerchief and sitting back in the shade, he opened the grating.

It was a woman who was already saying her prayers. He gave the responses as well as he could, from his boyish recollections, and was somewhat agitated by the delicious scent that emanated from her half-raised veil and from her bodice. At her first words he started; then he almost fainted. He had recognized his wife's voice, and it felt to him as if his seat were studded with sharp nails, as if the sides of the confessional were closing in on him, and as if the air were growing rarefied.

He collected himself, however, and, regaining his self-possession, he listened to what she had to say with increasing curiosity, and with some uncertain and necessary interruptions. The young woman sighed, was evidently keeping back something, spoke about her unhappiness, her melancholy life, her husband's neglect, the temptations by which she was surrounded, and which she found it so difficult to

resist; her conscience seemed to be burdened by an intolerable weight, though she hesitated to accuse herself directly. Mastering himself, Champdelin, in a low voice, with unctuous and coaxing tones, said:

"Courage, my child; tell me everything; the divine mercy is infinite; tell me all, without hesitation."

Then, all at once, she told him everything that was troubling her: how passion and desire had thrown her into the arms of one of her husband's best friends, the exquisite happiness that they felt when they met every day, his delightful tenderness, which she could no longer resist, the sin which was her joy, her only object, her consolation, her dream. She grew excited, sobbed, seemed enervated and worn out, as if she were still burning from her lover's kisses, hardly seemed to know what she was saying, and begged for temporary absolution from her sins. But Champdelin, in his exasperation, and unable to restrain himself any longer, interrupted her in a furious voice:

"Oh! no! Oh! no; this is not at all funny—keep such sort of things to yourself, my dear!"

* * * * * * *

Poor little Madame de Champdelin nearly went out of her mind with fright and astonishment, and they are now waiting for the decree which will break their chains and let them part.

AN
UNFORTUNATE LIKENESS

IT WAS during one of those sudden changes of the electric light, which at one time throws rays of exquisite pale pink, of a liquid gold filtered through the light hair of a woman, and at another, rays of bluish hue with strange tints, such as the sky assumes at twilight, in which the women with their bare shoulders looked like living flowers—it was, I say, on the night of the first of January at Montonirail's, the dainty painter of tall, undulating figures, of bright dresses, of Parisian prettiness—that tall Pescarelle, whom some called "Pussy," though I do not know why, suddenly said in a low voice:

"Well, people were not altogether mistaken, in fact, were only half wrong when they coupled my name with that of pretty Lucy Plonelle. She had caught me, just as a birdcatcher on a frosty morning catches an imprudent wren on a limed twig—in fact, she might have done whatever she liked with me.

"I was under the charm of her enigmatical and mocking smile, that smile in which her teeth gleamed cruelly between her red lips, and glistened as if they were ready to bite and to heighten the pleasure of the most delightful, the most voluptuous, kiss by pain.

"I loved everything in her—her feline suppleness, her languid looks which emerged from her half-closed lids, full of promises and temptation, her somewhat extreme elegance, and her hands, those long, delicate white hands, with blue veins, like the bloodless hands of a female saint in a stained glass window, and her slender fingers, on which only the large blood-drop of a ruby glittered.

"I would have given her all my remaining youth and vigor to have laid my burning hands upon the back of her cool, round neck, and to feel that bright, silk, golden mane enveloping me and caressing my skin. I was never tired of hearing her disdainful, petulant voice, those vibrations which sounded as if they proceeded from clear glass, whose music, at times, became hoarse, harsh, and fierce, like the loud, sonorous calls of the Valkyries.

"Good heavens! to be her lover, to be her chattel, to belong to her, to devote one's whole existence to her, to spend one's last half-penny and to sink in misery, only to have the glory and the happiness of possessing her splendid beauty, the sweetness of her kisses, the pink and the white of her demonlike soul all to myself, if only for a few months!

"It makes you laugh, I know, to think that I should have been caught like that—I who give such good, prudent advice to my friends—I who fear love as I do those quicksands and shoals which appear at

low tide and in which one may be swallowed up and disappear!

"But who can answer for himself, who can defend himself against such a danger, as the magnetic attraction that inheres in such a woman? Nevertheless, I got cured and perfectly cured, and that quite accidentally. This is how the enchantment, which was apparently so infrangible, was broken.

"On the first night of a play, I was sitting in the stalls close to Lucy, whose mother had accompanied her, as usual. They occupied the front of a box, side by side. From some unsurmountable attraction, I never ceased looking at the woman whom I loved with all the force of my being. I feasted my eyes on her beauty, I saw nobody except her in the theater, and did not listen to the piece that was being performed on the stage.

"Suddenly, however, I felt as if I had received a blow from a dagger in my heart, and I had an insane hallucination. Lucy had moved, and her pretty head was in profile, in the same attitude and with the same lines as her mother. I do not know what shadow or what play of light had hardened and altered the color of her delicate features, effacing their ideal prettiness, but the more I looked at them both, at the one who was young and the one who was old, the greater the distressing resemblance became.

"I saw Lucy growing older and older, striving against those accumulating years which bring wrinkles in the face, produce a double chin and crow's-feet, and spoil the mouth. *They almost looked like twins.*

"I suffered so, that I thought I should go mad. Yet in spite of myself, instead of shaking off this

feeling and making my escape out of the theater, far away into the noise and life of the boulevards, I persisted in looking at the other, at the old one, in examining her, in judging her, in dissecting her with my eyes. I got excited over her flabby cheeks, over those ridiculous dimples, that were half filled up, over that treble chin, that dyed hair, those lusterless eyes, and that nose, which was a caricature of Lucy's beautiful, attractive little nose.

"I had a prescience of the future. I loved her, and I should love her more and more every day, that little sorceress who had so despotically and so quickly conquered me. I should not allow any participation or any intrigue from the day she gave herself to me, and once intimately connected, who could tell whether, just as I was defending myself against it most, the legitimate termination — marriage — might not come?

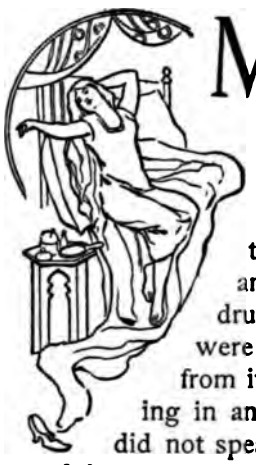
"Why not give one's name to a woman whom one loves, and whom one trusts? The reason was that I should be tied to a disfigured, ugly creature, with whom I should not venture to be seen in public. My friends would leer at her with laughter in their eyes, and with pity in their hearts for the man who was accompanying those remains.

"And so, as soon as the curtain had fallen, without saying good day or good evening, I had myself driven to the Moulin Rouge.

* * * * * * *

"Well," Florise d'Anglet exclaimed, "I shall never take mamma to the theater with me again, for the men are really going crazy!"

A NIGHT IN WHITECHAPEL



MY FRIEND Ledantec and I were each twenty-five, and we were visiting London for the first time in our lives. It was a Saturday evening in December, cold and foggy, and I think that this combination is more than enough to explain why my friend Ledantec and I managed to get abominably drunk, though, to tell the truth, we were not experiencing any discomfort from it. On the contrary, we were floating in an atmosphere of perfect bliss. We did not speak, certainly, for we were incapable of doing so, but then we had no inclination for conversation. What would be the good of it? We could easily read all our thoughts in each other's eyes, the more so because we knew that we were thinking about nothing whatever.

It was not, however, in order to arrive at that state of delicious, intellectual nullity, that we had gone to mysterious Whitechapel. We had gone into

the first public-house we saw, with the firm intention of studying manners and customs there,—not to mention morals,—as spectators, artists, and philosophers, but in the second public-house we entered, we ourselves began to resemble the objects of our investigations, that is to say, sponges soaked in alcohol. Between one public-house and the other, the outer air seemed to squeeze those sponges dry, and thus we rolled from public-house to public-house, till at last the sponges could hold no more.

Consequently, we had for some time bidden farewell to our studies in morals; they were now limited to two impressions: zigzags through the darkness outside, and a gleam of light outside the public houses. As to the imbibition of brandy, whisky, and gin, that was done mechanically, and our stomachs scarcely noticed it.

But what strange beings we had elbowed with during our long stoppages! What a number of faces to be remembered; what clothes, what attitudes, what talk, and what squalor!

At first we tried to note these things exactly in our memory, but there were so many of them, and our brains got muddled so quickly, that just then we had no very clear recollection of anything or anybody. Even objects immediately before us passed by in vague, dusky phantasmagoria, confounded with things farther away in an inextricable manner. The world became a sort of kaleidoscope to us, seen in a dream through the penumbra of an aquarium.

Suddenly we were roused from this state of somnolence, awakened as if by a blow on the chest, forced to fix our attention on what we saw, for, amid this whirl

of strange sights, one stranger than all attracted our eyes, and seemed to say: "Look at me."

It was at the open door of a public house. A ray of light streamed into the street through the half-open door, and the revealing ray fell right on to the specter that had just risen up there, dumb and motionless.

It was indeed a pitiful and terrible specter, and, above all, most real, as it stood out boldly against the dark background of the street, which it made darker still!

Young? yes, the woman was certainly young. There could be no doubt about that, when one looked at her smooth skin, her smiling mouth showing white teeth, and the firm bust which could be plainly noted under her thin dress.

But then, how explain her perfectly white hair, not gray or growing gray, but absolutely white, as white as any octogenarian's?

And then her eyes, those eyes beneath a smooth brow, were surely the eyes of an old woman? Certainly they were, and of how old a woman you could not tell, for it must have taken years of trouble and sorrow, of tears and of sleepless nights, and a long existence, thus to dull, wear out, and roughen those vitreous pupils.

Vitreous? Not exactly that. For roughened glass still retains a dull and milky brightness, a recollection, as it were, of its former transparency. But these eyes seemed rather to be of metal which had turned rusty, and really, if pewter could rust, I should have compared them to pewter covered with rust. They had the dead color of pewter, and at the same time emitted a glance which was the color of reddish water.

But it was not until some time later that I tried to define them approximately by retrospective analysis. At that moment, being altogether incapable of such effort, I could only realize in my own mind the idea of extreme decrepitude and horrible old age which they produced in my imagination.

Have I said that they were set in very puffy eyelids, which had no lashes whatever, and that on her unwrinkled forehead there was not a vestige of eyebrow? When I tell you this, and emphasize the dullness of their look beneath the hair of an octogenarian, it is not surprising that Ledantec and I said in a low voice at the sight of this woman, who from her physique must have been young:

"Oh! poor, poor old woman!"

Her age was further accentuated by the terrible poverty revealed by her dress. If she had been better dressed, her youthful looks would, perhaps, have struck us more; but her thin shawl, which was all that she had over her chemise, her single petticoat which was full of holes and almost in rags, not nearly reaching to her bare feet, her straw hat with ragged feathers and with ribbons of no particular color through age, seemed altogether so ancient, so prodigiously antique that we were deceived.

From what remote, superannuated, and obsolete period did they all spring? You could not guess, and by a perfectly natural association of ideas, you would infer that the unfortunate creature was as old as her clothes were. Now, by "you" I mean by Ledantec and myself, that is to say, by two men who were abominably drunk and who were arguing with the peculiar logic of intoxication.

Under the softening influence of alcohol we looked at the vague smile on those lips hiding the teeth of a child, without considering the youthful beauty of the latter. We saw nothing but her fixed and almost idiotic smile, which no longer contrasted with the dull expression of her face, but, on the contrary, strengthened it. For in spite of her teeth, to us it was the smile of an old woman, and as for myself, I was really pleased at my acuteness when I inferred that this grandmother with such pale lips had the teeth of a young girl. Still, thanks to the softening influence of alcohol, I was not angry with her for this artifice. I even thought it particularly praiseworthy, since, after all, the poor creature thus conscientiously pursued her calling, which was to seduce men. For there was no possible doubt that this grandmother was nothing more nor less than a prostitute.

And then, drunk! Horribly drunk, much more drunk than Ledantec and I were, for we really could manage to say: "Oh! Pity the poor, poor old woman!" while she was incapable of articulating a single syllable, of making a gesture, or even of imparting a gleam of promise, a furtive flash of allurement to her eyes. With her hands crossed on her stomach, and leaning against the front of the public house, her whole body as stiff as if in a fit of catalepsy, she had nothing alluring about her, save her sad smile. This inspired us with all the more pity because she was even more tipsy than we were, and so, by an identical, spontaneous movement, we each seized her by an arm to take her into the public-house with us.

To our great astonishment she resisted, and sprang back into the shadow again, out of the ray of light which came through the door. At the same time, she started off through the darkness dragging us with her, for she was clinging to our arms. We went along with her without speaking, not knowing where we were going, but without the least uneasiness on that score. Only, when she suddenly burst into violent sobs as she walked, Ledantec and I began to sob in unison.

The cold and the fog had suddenly congested our brains again, and we had again lost all precise consciousness of our acts, our thoughts, and our sensations. Our sobs had nothing of grief in them; we were floating in an atmosphere of perfect bliss, and I can remember that at that moment it was no longer the exterior world at which I seemed to be looking as through the penumbra of an aquarium; it was myself, a self composed of three, which was changing into something that was floating adrift in something, though what it was I did not know, composed as it was of inpalpable fog and intangible water. But it was exquisitely delightful.

From that moment I remember nothing more until something happened which had the effect of a clap of thunder on me, and made me sober in an instant.

Ledantec was standing in front of me, his face convulsed with horror, his hair standing on end, and his eyes staring out of his head. He shouted to me:

"Let us escape! Let us escape!" Whereupon I opened my eyes wide, and found myself lying on the floor, in a room into which daylight was shining. I saw some rags hanging against the wall, two chairs,

a broken jug lying on the floor by my side, and in a corner a wretched bed on which a woman was lying, who was no doubt dead, for her head was hanging over the side, and her long white hair reached almost to my feet.

With a bound I was up, like Ledantec.

"What!" I said to him, while my teeth chattered: "Did you kill her?"

"No, no," he replied. "But that makes no difference; let us be off."

I felt completely sober by that time, but I did think that he was still suffering somewhat from the effects of last night's drinking; otherwise, why should he wish to escape? Pity for the unfortunate woman forced me to say:

"What is the matter with her? If she is ill, we must look after her."

I went over to the wretched bed, in order to put her head back on the pillow, and discovered that she was neither dead nor ill, but only sound asleep. I also noticed that she was quite young. She still wore that idiotic smile, but her teeth were her own and those of a girl. Her smooth skin and firm bust showed that she was not more than sixteen; perhaps not so much.

"There! You see it, you can see it!" said Ledantec. "Let us be off."

He tried to drag me out. He was still drunk; I could see it by his feverish movements, his trembling hands, and his nervous looks. Then he said:

"I slept beside the old woman; but she is not old. Look at her; look at her; yes, she is old after all!"

And he lifted up her long hair by handfuls; it was like handfuls of white silk, and then he added, evidently in a sort of frenzy, which made me fear an attack of delirium tremens: "To think that I have begotten children, three, four children—who knows how many children, all in one night! And they were born immediately, and have grown up already! Let us be off."

Decidedly it was an attack of madness. Poor Ledantec! What could I do for him? I took his arm and tried to calm him, but he thought that I was going to try and make him go over to her again, and he pushed me away and exclaimed with tears in his voice: "If you do not believe me, look under the bed; the children are there; they are there, I tell you. Look here, just look here."

He threw himself down flat on his stomach, and actually pulled out one, two, three, four children, who had hidden under the bed. I do not exactly know whether they were boys or girls, but all, like the sleeping woman, had white hair, the hair of octogenarians.

Was I still drunk, like Ledantec, or was I mad? What was the meaning of this strange hallucination? I hesitated for a moment, and shook myself to be sure that I was awake.

No, no, I had all my wits about me, and in reality saw that horrible lot of little brats. They all had their faces in their hands, and were crying and squalling; then one of them suddenly jumped on to the bed; all the others followed his example, and the woman woke up.

And there we stood, while those five pairs of eyes, without eyebrows or eyelashes, eyes of the color

of dull pewter, with pupils the color of red water, were steadily fixed on us.

"Let us be off! let us be off!" Ledantec repeated, loosing his hold of me. This time I paid attention to what he said, and after throwing some small change on to the floor, I followed him, to make him understand, when he became quite sober, that he saw before him a poor Albino unfortunate, who had several brothers and sisters.

LOST!

Love is stronger than death, and consequently, also, than the greatest disaster.

A young and by no means bad-looking son of Palestine, one of the barons of the Almanac of the *Ghetto*,* who had left the field covered with wounds in the last general engagement on the Stock Exchange, used very frequently to visit the Universal Exhibition in Vienna in 1873, in order to divert his thoughts, and to console himself amid the varied scenes and the numerous objects of attraction there. One day, in the Russian section, he mte a newly-married couple, who had a very old coat of arms, but on the other hand, a very modest income.

This latter circumstance frequently emboldened the stockbroker to make secret overtures to the delightful little lady; overtures which might have fascinated certain Viennese actresses, but which were an insult

* The Jews' quarter in some towns.

to a respectable woman. The Baroness, whose name appeared in the "Almanach de Gotha,"* felt something very like hatred for the man from the *Ghetto,* and for a long time her pretty little head had been full of various plans of revenge.

The stockbroker, who was really and even passionately in love with her, got close to her one day in the Exhibition buildings. He did this the more easily through the flight of the little woman's husband who had scented extravagance as soon as she went up to the show-case of a Russian fur-dealer, before which she remained standing in rapture.

"Do look at that lovely fur," the Baroness said, while her dark eyes expressed her pleasure; "I must have it."

But she looked at the white ticket on which the price was marked.

"Four thousand rubles," she said in despair; "that is about six thousand florins."†

"Certainly," he replied, "but what of that? It is a sum not worth mentioning in the presence of such a charming lady."

"But my husband is not in a position—"

"Be less cruel than usual for once," the man from the *Ghetto* said to the young woman in a low voice, "and allow me to lay this sable skin at your feet."

"I presume that you are joking."

"Not I!"

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*An Almanac published early in Gotha, which contains a full account and genealogies of reigning families, mediatized princes, princely, non-reigning families, etc., etc.

†$3,000.

"I think you must be joking, as I cannot think that you intend to insult me."

"But, Baroness, I love you."

"That is one reason more why you should not make me angry."

"But—"

"This is outrageous," cried the energetic little woman; "I could flog you like 'Venus in the Fur'* did her slave.'

"Let me be your slave," the Stock Exchange baron replied ardently, "and I will gladly put up with everything from you. Really, in this sable cloak, and with a whip in your hand, you would make a most lovely picture of the heroine of that story."

The Baroness looked at the man for a moment with a peculiar smile.

"Then if I were to listen to you favorably, you would let me flog you?" said she after a pause.

"With pleasure."

"Very well," she replied quickly. "You will let me give you twenty-five cuts with a whip, and I will be yours after the twenty-fifth blow."

"Are you in earnest?"

"Fully."

The man from the *Ghetto* took her hand, and pressed it ardently to his lips.

"When may I come?"

"To-morrow evening at eight o'clock."

"And I may bring the sable cloak and the whip with me?"

"No, I will see about that myself."

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*One of Sacher-Masoch's novels.

Next evening the enamored stockbroker came to the abode of the charming little Baroness, and found her alone, lying on a couch, wrapped in dark fur and holding a dog whip in her small hand, which the man from the *Ghetto* kissed.

"You know our agreement," she began.

"Of course I do," the Stock Exchange baron replied. "I am to allow you to give me twenty-five cuts with the whip, and after the twenty-fifth you will listen to me."

"Yes, but I am going to tie your hands first of all."

The amorous baron quietly allowed this new Delila to tie his hands behind him, and then at her bidding, he knelt down before her, and she raised her whip and hit him hard.

"Oh! That hurts most confoundedly," he exclaimed.

"I mean it to hurt you," she said with a mocking laugh, and went on thrashing him without mercy. At last the poor fool groaned with pain, but he consoled himself with the thought that each blow brought him nearer to his happiness.

At the twenty-fourth cut, she threw the whip down.

"That only makes twenty-four," the beaten and would-be Don Juan remarked.

"I will make you a present of the twenty-fifth," she said with a laugh.

"And now you are mine, altogether mine," he exclaimed ardently.

"What are you thinking of?"

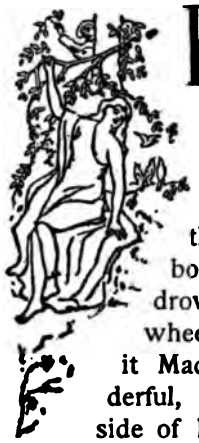
"Have I not let you beat me?"

"Certainly; but I promised you to grant your wish after the twenty-fifth blow, and you have only received twenty-four," the cruel little atom of virtue cried, "and I have witnesses to prove it."

With these words she drew back the curtains over the door, and her husband, followed by two other gentlemen came out of the next room, smiling. For a moment the stockbroker remained speechless on his knees before his Delila; then he gave a deep sigh, and sadly uttered that one, most significant word:

"Lost!"

A COUNTRY EXCURSION



FOR five months they had been talking of going to lunch at some country restaurant in the neighborhood of Paris, on Madame Dufour's birthday, and as they were looking forward very impatiently to the outing, they had risen very early that morning. Monsieur Dufour had borrowed the milkman's tilted cart, and drove himself. It was a very neat, two-wheeled conveyance, with a hood, and in it Madame Dufour, resplendent in a wonderful, sherry-colored silk dress, sat by the side of her husband.

The old grandmother and the daughter were accommodated with two chairs, and a yellow-haired youth, of whom, however, nothing was to be seen except his head, lay at the bottom of the trap.

When they got to the bridge of Neuilly, Monsieur Dufour said: "Here we are in the country at last!" At that warning, his wife grew sentimental about the beauties of nature. When they got to the crossroads

at Courbevoie, they were seized with admiration for the tremendous view down there: on the right was the spire of Argenteuil church, above it rose the hills of Sannois and the mill of Orgemont, while on the left, the aqueduct of Marly stood out against the clear morning sky. In the distance they could see the terrace of Saint-Germain, and opposite to them, at the end of a low chain of hills, the new fort of Cormeilles. Afar—a very long way off, beyond the plains and villages—one could see the somber green of the forests.

The sun was beginning to shine in their faces, the dust got into their eyes, and on either side of the road there stretched an interminable tract of bare, ugly country, which smelled unpleasantly. You would have thought that it had been ravaged by a pestilence which had even attacked the buildings, for skeletons of dilapidated and deserted houses, or small cottages left in an unfinished state, as if the contractors had not been paid, reared their four roofless walls on each side.

Here and there tall factory-chimneys rose up from the barren soil, the only vegetation on that putrid land, where the spring breezes wafted an odor of petroleum and soot, mingled with another smell that was even still less agreeable. At last, however, they crossed the Seine a second time. It was delightful on the bridge; the river sparkled in the sun, and they had a feeling of quiet satisfaction and enjoyment in drinking in purer air, not impregnated by the black smoke of factories, nor by the miasma from the deposits of night-soil. A man whom they met told them that the name of the place was Bézons; so Mon-

sieur Dufour pulled up, and read the attractive announcement outside an eating-house:

"Restaurant Poulin, stews and fried fish, private rooms, arbors, and swings."

"Well! Madame Dufour, will this suit you? Will you make up your mind at last?"

She read the announcement in her turn, and then looked at the house for a time.

It was a white country inn, built by the roadside, and through the open door she could see the bright zinc of the counter, at which two workmen out for the day were sitting. At last she made up her mind, and said:

"Yes, this will do; and, besides, there is a view."

So they drove into a large yard studded with trees, behind the inn, which was only separated from the river by the towing-path, and got out. The husband sprang out first, and held out his arms for his wife. As the step was very high, Madame Dufour, in order to reach him, had to show the lower part of her limbs, whose former slenderness had disappeared in fat. Monsieur Dufour, who was already getting excited by the country air, pinched her calf, and then, taking her in his arms, set her on to the ground, as if she had been some enormous bundle. She shook the dust out of the silk dress, and then looked round, to see in what sort of a place she was.

She was a stout woman, of about thirty-six, full-blown and delightful to look at. She could hardly breathe, as she was laced too tightly, which forced the heaving mass of her superabundant bosom up to her double chin. Next, the girl put her hand on to her father's shoulder, and jumped lightly down. The youth

with the yellow hair had got down by stepping on the wheel, and he helped Monsieur Dufour to get the grandmother out. Then they unharnessed the horse, which they tied up to a tree, and the carriage fell back, with both shafts in the air. The man and boy took off their coats, washed their hands in a pail of water, and then joined the ladies, who had already taken possession of the swings.

Mademoiselle Dufour was trying to swing herself standing up, but she could not succeed in getting a start. She was a pretty girl of about eighteen; one of those women who suddenly excite your desire when you meet them in the street, and who leave you with a vague feeling of uneasiness and of excited senses. She was tall, had a small waist and large hips, with a dark skin, very large eyes, and very black hair. Her dress clearly marked the outlines of her firm, full figure, which was accentuated by the motion of her hips as she tried to swing herself higher. Her arms were stretched over her head to hold the rope, so that her bosom rose at every movement she made. Her hat, which a gust of wind had blown off, was hanging behind her, and as the swing gradually rose higher and higher, she showed her delicate limbs up to the knees each time, and the wind from the perfumed petticoats, more heady than the fumes of wine, blew into the faces of her father and friend, who were looking at her in admiration.

Sitting in the other swing, Madame Dufour kept saying in a monotonous voice:

"Cyprian, come and swing me; do come and swing me, Cyprian!"

At last he complied, and turning up his shirt-sleeves,

as if he intended to work very hard, with much difficulty he set his wife in motion. She clutched the two ropes, and held her legs out straight, so as not to touch the ground. She enjoyed feeling giddy from the motion of the swing, and her whole figure shook like a jelly on a dish, but as she went higher and higher, she grew too giddy and got frightened. Every time she was coming back, she uttered a shriek, which made all the little urchins come round, and, down below, beneath the garden hedge, she vaguely saw a row of mischievous heads, making various grimaces as they laughed.

When a servant girl came out, they ordered lunch.

"Some fried fish, a stewed rabbit, salad, and dessert," Madame Dufour said, with an important air.

"Bring two quarts of beer and a bottle of claret," her husband said.

"We will have lunch on the grass," the girl added.

The grandmother, who had an affection for cats, had been petting one that belonged to the house, and had been bestowing the most affectionate words on it, for the last ten minutes. The animal, no doubt secretly pleased by her attentions, kept close to the good woman, but just out of reach of her hand, and quietly walked round the trees, against which she rubbed herself, with her tail up, purring with pleasure.

"Hallo!" exclaimed the youth with the yellow hair, who was ferreting about, "here are two swell boats!" They all went to look at them, and saw two beautiful skiffs in a wooden boathouse, which were as beautifully finished as if they had been objects of luxury. They were moored side by side, like two tall, slender girls, in their narrow shining length, and

aroused in one a wish to float in them on warm summer mornings and evenings, along flower-covered banks of the river, where the trees dip their branches into the water, where the rushes are continually rustling in the breeze, and where the swift kingfishers dart about like flashes of blue lightning.

The whole family looked at them with great respect.

"They are indeed two swell boats," Monsieur Dufour repeated gravely, and he examined them closely, commenting on them like a connoisseur. He had been in the habit of rowing in his younger days, he said, and when he had that in his hands—and he went through the action of pulling the oars—he did not care a fig for anybody. He had beaten more than one Englishman formerly at the Joinville regattas. He grew quite excited at last, and offered to make a bet that in a boat like that he could row six miles an hour, without exerting himself.

"Lunch is ready," said the waitress, appearing at the entrance to the boathouse. They all hurried off, but two young men were already lunching at the best place, which Madame Dufour had chosen in her mind as her seat. No doubt they were the owners of the skiffs, for they were dressed in boating costume. They were stretched out, almost lying on chairs, and were sunburned, and had on flannel trousers and thin cotton jerseys, with short sleeves, which showed their bare arms, which were as strong as blacksmiths'. They were two strong young fellows, who thought a great deal of their vigor, and who showed in all their movements that elasticity and grace of limb which can only be acquired by exercise, and which is so

different to the awkwardness with which the same continual work stamps the mechanic.

They exchanged a rapid smile when they saw the mother, and then a look on seeing the daughter.

"Let us give up our place," one of them said; "it will make us acquainted with them."

The other got up immediately, and holding his black and red boating-cap in his hand, he politely offered the ladies the only shady place in the garden. With many excuses they accepted, and so that it might be more rural, they sat on the grass, without either tables or chairs.

The two young men took their plates, knives, forks, etc., to a table a little way off, and began to eat again. Their bare arms, which they showed continually, rather embarrassed the young girl, who even pretended to turn her head aside, and not to see them. But Madame Dufour, who was rather bolder, tempted by feminine curiosity, looked at them every moment, and no doubt compared them with the secret unsightliness of her husband. She had squatted herself on the ground with her legs tucked under her, after the manner of tailors, and kept wriggling about continually, under the pretext that ants were crawling about her somewhere. Monsieur Dufour, whom the politeness of the strangers had put into rather a bad temper, was trying to find a comfortable position, which he did not, however, succeed in doing, while the youth with the yellow hair was eating as silently as an ogre.

"It is lovely weather, Monsieur," the stout lady said to one of the boating-men. She wished to be friendly, because they had given up their place.

"It is, indeed, Madame," he replied; "do you often go into the country?"

"Oh! Only once or twice a year, to get a little fresh air; and you, Monsieur?"

"I come and sleep here every night."

"Oh! That must be very nice?"

"Certainly it is, Madame." And he gave them such a practical account of his daily life, that in the hearts of these shopkeepers, who were deprived of the meadows, and who longed for country walks, it roused that innate love of nature, which they all felt so strongly the whole year round, behind the counter in their shop.

The girl raised her eyes and looked at the oarsman with emotion, and Monsieur Dufour spoke for the first time.

"It is indeed a happy life," he said. And then he added: "A little more rabbit, my dear?"

"No, thank you," she replied, and turning to the young men again, and pointing to their arms, asked: "Do you never feel cold like that?"

They both laughed, and amazed the family by telling of the enormous fatigue they could endure, of bathing while in a state of tremendous perspiration, of rowing in the fog at night, and they struck their chests violently, to show how they sounded.

"Ah! You look very strong," the husband said, and he did not talk any more of the time when he used to beat the English. The girl was looking at them askance now, and the young fellow with the yellow hair, as he had swallowed some wine the wrong way, and was coughing violently, bespattered Madame Dufour's sherry-colored silk dress. Madame

got angry, and sent for some water to wash the spots.

Meanwhile it had grown unbearably hot, the sparkling river looked like a blaze of fire and the fumes of the wine were getting into their heads. Monsieur Dufour, who had a violent hiccough, had unbuttoned his waistcoat and the top of his trousers, while his wife, who felt choking, was gradually unfastening her dress. The youth was shaking his yellow wig in a happy frame of mind, and kept helping himself to wine, and as the old grandmother felt drunk, she endeavored to be very stiff and dignified. As for the girl, she showed nothing except a peculiar brightness in her eyes, while the brown skin on the cheeks became more rosy.

The coffee finished them off; they spoke of singing, and each of them sang, or repeated a couplet, which the others repeated enthusiastically. Then they got up with some difficulty, and while the two women, who were rather dizzy, were getting some fresh air, the two males, who were altogether drunk, were performing gymnastic tricks. Heavy, limp, and with scarlet faces, they hung awkwardly on to the iron rings, without being able to raise themselves, while their shirts were continually threatening to part company with their trousers, and to flap in the wind like flags.

Meanwhile, the two boating-men had got their skiffs into the water. They came back, and politely asked the ladies whether they would like a row.

"Would you like one, Monsieur Dufour?" his wife exclaimed. "Please come!"

He merely gave her a drunken look, without understanding what she said. Then one of the rowers

came up, with two fishing-rods in his hand; and the hope of catching a gudgeon, that great aim of the Parisian shopkeeper, made Dufour's dull eyes gleam. He politely allowed them to do whatever they liked, while he sat in the shade, under the bridge, with his feet dangling over the river, by the side of the young man with the yellow hair, who was sleeping soundly close to him.

One of the boating-men made a martyr of himself, and took the mother.

"Let us go to the little wood on the Île aux Anglais!" he called out, as he rowed off. The other skiff went slower, for the rower was looking at his companion so intently, that he thought of nothing else. His emotion paralyzed his strength, while the girl, who was sitting on the steerer's seat, gave herself up to the enjoyment of being on the water. She felt disinclined to think, felt a lassitude in her limbs, a complete self-relaxation, as if she were intoxicated. She had become very flushed, and breathed pantingly. The effect of the wine, increased by the extreme heat, made all the trees on the bank seem to bow, as she passed. A vague wish for enjoyment, a fermentation of her blood, seemed to pervade her whole body, and she was also a little agitated by this *tête-à-tête* on the water, in a place which seemed depopulated by the heat, with this young man, who thought her so pretty, whose looks seemed to caress her skin, and whose eyes were as penetrating and exciting as the sun's rays.

Their inability to speak increased their emotion, and they looked about them. At last he made an effort and asked her name.

"Henriette," she said.

"Why! My name is Henri," he replied. The sound of their voices calmed them, and they looked at the banks. The other skiff had gone ahead of them, and seemed to be waiting for them. The rower called out:

"We will meet you in the wood; we are going as far as Robinson's,* because Madame Dufour is thirsty." Then he bent over his oars again and rowed off so quickly that he was soon out of sight.

Meanwhile, a continual roar, which they had heard for some time, came nearer, and the river itself seemed to shiver, as if the dull noise were rising from its depths.

"What is that noise?" she asked. It was the noise of the weir, which cut the river in two, at the island. He was explaining it to her, when above the noise of the waterfall they heard the song of a bird, which seemed a long way off.

"Listen!" he said; "the nightingales are singing during the day, so the females must be sitting."

A nightingale! She had never heard one before, and the idea of listening to one roused visions of poetic tenderness in her heart. A nightingale! That is to say, the invisible witness of the lover's interview which Juliette invoked on her balcony†; that celestial music which is attuned to human kisses; that eternal inspirer of all those languorous romances which open idealized visions to the poor, tender, little hearts of sensitive girls!

* A well-known restaurant on the banks of the Seine, much frequented by the bourgeoisie.

† "Romeo and Juliet," Act III., Scene V.

She wanted to hear a nightingale.

"We must not make a noise," her companion said, "and then we can go into the wood, and sit down close to it."

The skiff seemed to glide. They saw the trees on the island, the banks of which were so low that they could look into the depths of the thickets. They stopped, he made the boat fast, Henriette took hold of Henri's arm, and they went beneath the trees.

"Stoop," he said, so she bent down, and they went into an inextricable thicket of creepers, leaves, and reed-grass, which formed an impenetrable retreat, and which the young man laughingly called "his private room."

Just above their heads, perched in one of the trees which hid them, the bird was still singing. He uttered shakes and *roulades*, and then long, vibrating sounds that filled the air and seemed to lose themselves in the distance, across the level country, through that burning silence which hung low upon the whole country round. They did not speak for fear of frightening the bird away. They were sitting close together, and slowly Henri's arm stole round the girl's waist and squeezed it gently. She took that daring hand, but without anger, and kept removing it whenever he put it round her; not, however, feeling at all embarrassed by this caress, just as if it had been something quite natural which she was resisting just as naturally.

She was listening to the bird in ecstasy. She felt an infinite longing for happiness, for some sudden demonstration of tenderness, for a revelation of divine poesy. She felt such a softening at her heart, and

such a relaxation of her nerves, that she began to cry, without knowing why. The young man was now straining her close to him, and she did not remove his arm; she did not think of it. Suddenly the nightingale stopped, and a voice called out in the distance:

"Henriette!"

"Do not reply," he said in a low voice, "you will drive the bird away."

But she had no idea of doing so, and they remained in the same position for some time. Madame Dufour had sat down somewhere or other, for from time to time they heard the stout lady break out into little bursts of laughter.

The girl was still crying; she was filled with strange sensations. Henri's head was on her shoulder, and suddenly he kissed her on the lips. She was surprised and angry, and, to avoid him, she stood up.

They were both very pale when they quitted their grassy retreat. The blue sky looked dull to them, the ardent sun was clouded over to their eyes, they perceived not the solitude and the silence. They walked quickly side by side, without speaking or touching each other, appearing to be irreconcilable enemies, as if disgust had sprung up between them, and hatred between their souls. From time to time Henriette called out: "Mamma!"

By and by they heard a noise in a thicket, and Madame Dufour appeared, looking rather confused, and her companion's face was wrinkled with smiles that he could not check.

Madame Dufour took his arm, and they returned to the boats. Henri went on first, still without speaking, by the girl's side, and at last they got back to

Bézons. Monsieur Dufour, who had sobered up, was waiting for them very impatiently, while the youth with the yellow hair was having a mouthful of something to eat before leaving the inn. The carriage was in the yard, with the horse in, and the grandmother, who had already got in, was frightened at the thought of being overtaken by night, before they got back to Paris, the outskirts not being safe.

The young men shook hands with them, and the Dufour family drove off.

"Good-bye, until we meet again!" the oarsmen cried, and the answers they got were a sigh and a tear.

* * * * * * *

Two months later, as Henri was going along the Rue des Martyrs, he saw "Dufour, Ironmonger," over a door. So he went in, and saw the stout lady sitting at the counter. They recognized each other immediately, and after an interchange of polite greetings, he inquired after them all.

"And how is Mademoiselle Henriette?" he inquired, specially.

"Very well, thank you; she is married."

"Ah!" Mastering his feelings, he added: "To whom was she married?"

"To that young man who went with us, you know; he has joined us in business."

"I remember him, perfectly."

He was going out, feeling unhappy, though scarcely knowing why, when Madame called him back.

"And how is your friend?" she asked, rather shyly.

"He is very well, thank you."

"Please give him our compliments, and beg him to come and call when he is in the neighborhood." She then added: "Tell him it will give me great pleasure."

"I will be sure to do so. Adieu!"

"I will not say that; come again, very soon."

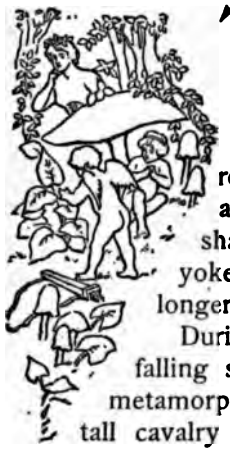
* * * * * * *

The next year, one very hot Sunday, all the details of that memorable adventure suddenly came back to him so clearly that he revisited the "private room" in the wood, and was overwhelmed with astonishment when he went in. She was sitting on the grass, looking very sad, while by her side, again in his shirt-sleeves, the young man with the yellow hair was sleeping soundly, like some brute.

She grew so pale when she saw Henri, that at first he thought she was going to faint; then, however, they began to talk quite naturally. But when he told her that he was very fond of that spot, and went there very often on Sundays, she looked into his eyes for a long time. "I, too, often think of it," she replied.

"Come, my dear," her husband said, with a yawn; "I think it is time for us to be going."

THE RELICS



THEY had given him a grand public funeral, like they do to victorious soldiers who have added some dazzling pages to the glorious annals of their country, who have restored courage to desponding hearts and cast over other nations the proud shadow of their country's flag, like a yoke under which those go who are no longer to have a country, or liberty.

During a whole bright, calm night, when falling stars made people think of unknown metamorphoses and the transmigration of souls, tall cavalry soldiers in their cuirasses, sitting as motionless as statues on their horses, had watched by the dead man's coffin, which was resting, covered with wreaths, under the porch of the heroes, every stone of which is engraved with the name of a brave man and of a battle.

The whole town was in mourning, as if it had lost the only object that had possession of its heart and love. The crowd went silently and thoughtfully

down the avenue of the Champs-Elysées, and almost fought for the commemorative medals and the common portraits which hawkers were selling, or climbed upon the stands which street boys had erected here and there, from which they could see over the heads of the crowd.

The Place de la Concorde had something solemn about it, with its circle of statues hung from head to foot with long crape coverings, which looked in the distance like widows, weeping and praying.

According to his last wish, Jean Ramel had been conveyed to the Panthéon in the wretched paupers' hearse, which takes them to the common grave, behind the shambling trot of some thin and broken-winded horse.

That dreadful, black conveyance without any drapery, without plumes and without flowers, followed by Ministers and deputies, by several regiments with their bands, with their flags flying above the helmets and the sabers, by children from the national schools, by delegates from the provinces and by an innumerable crowd of men in blouses, of women, of shopkeepers from every quarter, had a most theatrical effect. Standing on the steps of the Panthéon, at the foot of the massive columns of the portico, the orators successively descanted on Ramel's apotheosis, tried to make their voices dominate over the noise, emphasized their pompous periods, and finished the performance by a poor third act, making people yawn and gradually dispersing the audience. People remembered who that man had been on whom such posthumous honors were being bestowed, and who was having such a funeral: it was Jean Ramel.

Those three sonorous syllables called up a leonine head, with white hair thrown back in disorder like a mane, with features that looked as if they had been cut out with a bill-hook, but which were so powerful, and in which there flamed such life, as to make one forget their vulgarity and ugliness,—with black eyes under bushy eyebrows, eyes which dilated and flashed like lightning, now veiled as if in tears and then filled with serene mildness,—a voice which now growled so as almost to terrify its hearers, and would have filled the hall of some working-man's club, full of the thick smoke from strong pipes, without being affected by it, and then would be soft, coaxing, persuasive, and unctuous as that of a priest who is holding out promises of Paradise, or giving absolution for our sins.

He had had the good luck to be persecuted, to be in the eyes of the people the incarnation of that lying formula which appears on every public edifice, those three words of the Golden Age which make those who think, those who suffer, and those who govern, smile somewhat sadly—"Liberty, Fraternity, Equality." Luck had been kind to him, had sustained, had pushed him on by the shoulders, and had set him up on his pedestal again when he had fallen as all idols do.

He spoke and he wrote, and always in order to announce the good news to all the multitudes who suffered,—no matter to what grade of society they might belong,—to hold out his hand to them and to defend them, to attack the abuses of the "Code,"—that book of injustice and severity,—to speak the truth boldly, even when it lashed his enemies as if it had been a whip.

His books were like Gospels which are read, chapter by chapter, and warmed the most despairing and the most sorrowing hearts, bringing comfort, hope, and dreams to each.

He had lived very modestly until the end, and appeared to spend nothing, and had only kept one old servant, who spoke to him in the Basque dialect.

That chaste philosopher, who had all his life long feared women's snares and wiles, who had looked upon love as a luxury made only for the rich and idle, which unsettles the brain and interferes with acuteness of thought, had allowed himself to be caught like an ordinary man—late in life—when his hair was white and his forehead deeply wrinkled.

It was not, however, as happens in the visions of solitary ascetics, some strange queen or female magician, with stars in her eyes and witchery in her voice, or some loose woman who holds up the symbolical lamp immodestly, to light up her radiant nudity and the pink and white bouquet of her sweet smelling skin, or some woman in search of voluptuous pleasures, whose lascivious appeals it is impossible for any man to listen to without being excited to the very depths of his being. Neither a Princess out of some fairy tale, nor a frail beauty who was expert in reviving the ardor of old men, and of leading them astray, nor a woman disgusted with her ideals, finding them all alike, who dreams of awakening the heart of one of those men who suffer, who afford so much alleviation to human misery, who seem to be surrounded by a halo, and who never know anything but the true, the beautiful, and the good.

It was only a little girl of twenty, who was as pretty as a wild flower, had a ringing laugh, white teeth, and a mind that was as spotless as a new mirror, in which no figure has been reflected as yet.

He was an exile at the time for having given public expression to what he thought, and was living in an Italian village which was buried in chestnut-trees and situated on the shores of a lake so narrow and so transparent that it might have been taken for some nobleman's fish-pond, an emerald in a large park. It consisted of about twenty red-tiled houses; steep paths paved with flint led up the side of the hills among the vines, where the Madonna, full of grace and goodness, extended her indulgences from shrines which contained dusty, tinsel nosegays.

For the first time in his life Ramel remarked that there were some lips that were more desirable, more smiling than others, that there was hair in which it must be delicious to bury the fingers as in fine silk, and which it must be delightful to kiss, and that there were eyes which contained an infinitude of caresses. He wandered right through the eclogue, which at length revealed true happiness to him, and he had a child, a son, by her.

This was the only secret that Ramel jealously concealed, and of which no more than two or three of his oldest friends knew aught. While he hesitated about spending twopence on himself, and went to the Institute and to the Chamber of Deputies outside an omnibus, Pepa led the happy life of a millionaire who is not frightened of the to-morrow, and brought up her son like a little prince, with a tutor and three servants, who had nothing to do but to look after him.

All that Ramel made went into his mistress's hands, and when he felt that his last hour was approaching, and that there was no hope of his recovery—in full possession of his faculties and with joy in his dull eyes, he gave his name to Pepa, and made her his lawful widow, in the presence of all his friends. She inherited everything that her former lover left behind, a considerable income from the royalties on his books, and also his pension, which the State continued to pay to her.

Little Ramel throve wonderfully amid all this luxury, and gave free scope to his instincts and his caprices, without his mother ever having the courage to reprove him in the least, and he did not bear the slightest resemblance to Jean Ramel.

Full of pranks, effeminate, a superfine dandy, and precociously vicious, he suggested the idea of those pages at the Court of Florence, whom we meet with in the "Decameron," and who were the playthings for the idle hands of patrician ladies.

He was very ignorant, lived at a great rate, bet on races, and played cards for heavy stakes with seasoned gamblers, old enough to be his father. It was distressing to hear this lad joke about the memory of him whom he called *the old man,* and persecute his mother because of the worship and adoration which she felt for Jean Ramel, whom she spoke of as if he had become a demigod, when he died, as in the Roman theogony.

He would have liked altogether to have altered the arrangement of that sanctuary, the drawing-room, where Pepa kept some of her husband's manuscripts, the furniture that he had most frequently used, the

bed on which he had died, his pens, his clothes, and his weapons. And one evening, not knowing how to dress himself up more originally than the rest for a masked ball that stout Toinette Danicheff was going to give as a housewarming, without saying a word to his mother, he took down the Academician's dress, the sword and cocked hat that had belonged to Jean Ramel, and put it on as if it had been a disguise on Shrove Tuesday.

Slightly built and with thin arms and legs, the wide clothes hung on him. He was a comical sight with the embroidered skirt of his coat sweeping the carpet, and his sword knocking against his heels. The elbows and the collar were shiny and greasy from wear, for the Master had worn it until it was threadbare, to avoid having to buy another, and had never thought of replacing it.

He made a tremendous hit, and fair Liline Ablette laughed so at his grimaces and his disguise, that that night she threw over Prince Noureddin for him, although he had paid for her house, her horses, and everything else, and allowed her six thousand francs a month for extras and pocket money.

A RUPTURE

"IT IS just as I tell you, my dear fellow. Those two poor things whom we all of us envied, who looked like a couple of doves when they are billing and cooing, and were always *spooning*, until they made themselves ridiculous, now hate each other just as much as they used to adore each other. It is a complete break, and one of those which cannot be mended like an old plate! And all for a bit of nonsense, for something so funny that it ought to have brought them closer together and have amused them immensely.

"But how can a man explain himself when he is dying of jealousy and keeps repeating to his terrified mistress: 'You are lying! you are lying!' When he shakes her, interrupts her while she is speaking, and says such hard things to her that at last she flies into a rage, and thinks of nothing but of giving him *tit for tat* and of paying him out in his own coin, does not care a straw about destroying his happiness, consigns everything to the devil, and talks a lot of bosh which she certainly does not believe—can you blame her? And then, because there is nothing so stupid and so obstinate in the whole

world as a lover, neither he nor she will take the first step, and own to having been in the wrong, and apologize for having gone too far. Both wait and watch and do not even write a few lines about nothing, a subterfuge which would restore peace. No, they let day succeed day, and there are feverish and sleepless nights when the bed seems so hard, so cheerless, and so large, and habits get weakened and the fire of love that was still smoldering at the bottom of each heart dies in smoke. By degrees both find some reason for what they wish to do, think themselves idiots to lose the time which will never return, in that fashion, and so *good-bye*, and there you are! That is how Josine Cadenette and that great idiot Servance separated."

Lalie Spring had lighted a cigarette, and the blue smoke played about her fine, fair hair, making one think of those last rays of the setting sun which pierce through the clouds at sunset. Resting her elbows on his knees, and with her chin in her hand in a dreamy attitude, she murmured:

"Sad, isn't it?"

"Bah!" I replied, "at their age people easily console themselves, and everything begins over again, even love!"

"Well, Josine has already found somebody else—"

"And did she tell you her story?"

"Of course she did, and it is such a joke! You know that Servance is one of those fellows you would wish to have when you have time to amuse yourself, so self-possessed that he would be capable of ruining all the older ones in a girls' school, and given to trifling as much as most men, so that Josine calls

him 'perpetual motion.' He would have liked to prolong his fun until the Day of Judgment, and seemed to fancy that beds were not made to sleep in at all. But she could not get used to being deprived of nearly all her rest, and it really made her ill. But as she wished to be as conciliatory as possible, to love and to be loved as ardently as in the past, and also to sleep off the effects of her happiness peacefully, she rented a small room in a distant quarter, in a quiet shady street, giving out that she had just come from the country, and put hardly any furniture into it except a good bed and a dressing-table.

"Then she invented an old aunt, who was ill and always grumbling, who suffered from heart disease and lived in one of the suburbs, and so, several times a week, Josine took refuge in her sleeping place, and used to sleep late there, as if it had been some delicious abode, where one forgets the whole world. Once they forgot to call her at the proper time; she got back late, tired, with red and swollen eyelids, involved herself in lies, contradicted herself, and looked so much as if she had just come from the confessional, feeling horribly ashamed of herself, or, as if she had hurried home from some assignation, that Servance worried himself about it, thought that he was being made a fool of, as so many of his comrades were, got into a rage and made up his mind to set the matter straight, and to discover who this aunt was who had so suddenly fallen from the skies.

"He applied to an obliging agency, where they excited his jealousy, exasperated him day after day by making him believe that Josine Cadenette was making an absolute fool of him, had no more a sick aunt

than she had any virtue, but that during the day she continued the little debaucheries which she committed with him at night, and that she shamelessly frequented some discreet bachelor's lodgings, where probably more than one of his best friends was amusing himself at his expense, and having his share of the cake.

"He was fool enough to believe these fellows, instead of going and watching Josine himself, putting his nose into the business, and finding and knocking at the door of her room. He wanted to hear no more, and would not listen to her. For a trifle, in spite of her tears, he would have turned the poor thing into the streets, as if she had been a bundle of dirty linen. You may guess how she flew out at him and told him all sorts of things to annoy him; she let him believe he was not mistaken, that she had had enough of his affection, and that she was madly in love with another man. He grew very pale when she said that, looked at her furiously, clenched his teeth, and said in a hoarse voice:

"'Tell me his name, tell me his name!'

"'Oh!' she said, chaffingly, 'you know him very well!' and if I had not happened to have gone in I think there would have been a tragedy. How stupid they are: they were so happy and loved each other so. And now Josine is living with fat Schweinssohn, a low scoundrel who will live upon her, and Servance has taken up with Sophie Labisque, who might easily be his mother. You know her, that bundle of red and yellow, who has been at that kind of thing for eighteen years, and whom Laglandée has christened '*Sæcula sæculorum!*'"

"By Jove! I should rather think I did!"

MARGOT'S TAPERS

I.

ON THE evening of Midsummer day, Margot Fresquyl had allowed herself to taste for the first time the delicious intoxication of the mortal sin of loving.

While most of the young people were holding one another's hands and dancing in a circle round the burning logs, the girl had slyly taken the deserted road which lead to the wood, leaning on the arm of her partner, a tall, vigorous farm-servant, whose Christian name was Tiennou, which, by the way, was the only name he had borne from his birth. For he was entered on the register of births with this curt note, "Father and mother unknown," having been found on St. Stephen's Day under a shed on a farm, where some poor, despairing wretch had abandoned him, perhaps even without turning her head to look at him.

For months Tiennou had madly worshiped the pretty blond girl, who was now trembling as he clasped her in his arms, under the sweet coolness of the leaves. He well remembered how she had dazzled

him — like some ecstatic and ineffaceable vision, — the first time that he saw her in her father's mill, where he had gone to ask for work. She stood out all rosy from the warmth of the day, amid the impalpable clouds of flour, which diffused a misty whiteness through the air. With her hair hanging about her in untidy curls, as if she had just awakened from a profound sleep, she stretched herself lazily, her bare arms clasped behind her head, yawning so as to show her white teeth, which glistened like those of a young wolf, and from beneath her unbuttoned bodice her maiden bosom appeared with innocent immodesty. He told her that he thought her adorable, so stupidly that she made fun of him and scourged him with her cruel laughter. From that day, he spent his life in Margot's shadow. He might have been taken for one of those wild beasts ardent with desire, which ceaselessly utter maddened cries to the stars on nights when the constellations bathe the dark coverts in warm light. Margot met him wherever she went, and seized with pity, and by degrees attracted by his ardor, by his dumb entreaties, by the burning looks which flashed from his large eyes, she had returned his love. She had dreamed restlessly that during a whole night she had been in his vigorous arms, which pressed her like corn that is being crushed in the mill; that she was obeying a man who had subdued her, and was learning strange things which other girls talked about in a low voice when drawing water at the well.

She had, however, been obliged to wait until Midsummer day, for the miller watched over his heiress very carefully.

The two lovers told each other all this as they were going along the dark road, innocently giving utterance to words of happiness which rose to their lips like the refrain of a forgotten song. At times they were silent, not knowing what more to say and not daring to embrace each other any more. The night was soft and warm, the warmth of a half-closed alcove in a bedroom, and had the effect of a tumbler of new wine.

The leaves were sleeping motionless and in supreme peace, and in the distance they could hear the monotonous trill of the brooks as they flowed over the stones. Amid the faint noise of the insects, the nightingales were answering each other from tree to tree. Everything seemed alive with hidden life, the sky was bright, and the falling stars might have been taken for white forms wandering among the dark trunks of the trees.

"Why have we come?" Margot asked, in a panting voice. "Do you not want me any more, Tiennou?"

"Alas! I dare not," he replied. "Listen: you know that I was picked up on the highroad, that I have nothing in the world except my two arms, and that miller Fresquyl will never let his daughter marry a poor devil like me."

She interrupted him with a painful gesture, and putting her lips to his, she said:

"What does that matter? I love you, and I want you. Take me."

And thus it was, on St. John's eve, that Margot Fresquyl for the first time yielded to the mortal sin of love.

II.

Did the miller guess his daughter's secret when he heard her singing merrily from dawn till dusk and saw her sitting dreaming at her window instead of sewing as she was in the habit of doing?

Did he see it when she threw ardent kisses from the tips of her fingers to her lover at a distance?

Whether he did or not, he shut up poor Margot in the mill as if it had been a prison. No more love or pleasure, no more meetings at night on the verge of the wood. When she chatted with the passers-by, or tried furtively to open the gate of the inclosure to make her escape, her father beat her as if she had been some disobedient animal, beat her until she would fall on her knees on the floor with clasped hands, scarcely able to move, her whole body covered with purple bruises.

She pretended to obey him, but she revolted in her whole being, and the string of bitter insults which he heaped upon her rang in her head. With clenched hands, and a gesture of terrible hatred, she cursed him for standing in the way of her love. At night, she rolled about on her bed, bit the sheets, moaned, stretched herself out for imaginary embraces, maddened by the longing with which her body was still palpitating. She called out Tiennou's name aloud, she broke the peaceful stillness of the sleeping house with her heartrending sobs, and her weeping drowned the monotonous sound of the water dripping under the arch of the mill, between the immovable paddles of the wheel.

III.

Then came that terrible week in October when the unfortunate young fellows who had drawn bad numbers had to join their regiments.* Tiennou was one of them. Margot was desperate at the thought of not seeing him for five interminable years, and grieving that they could not even, at that hour of sad farewell, be alone and exchange those consoling words which afterward soften the pang of absence.

Tiennou prowled about the house, like a starving beggar, and one morning, while the miller was mending the wheel, he managed to see Margot.

"I will wait for you in the old place to-night," he whispered, in terrible grief. "I know it is the last time. I shall throw myself into some deep hole in the river if you do not come!"

"I will be there, Tiennou," she replied, in a bewildered manner. "I swear I will be there, even if I have to do something terrible to enable me to come!"

* * * * * * *

The village was on fire, illuming the dark night, and the flames, fanned by the wind, rose up like evil torches. The thatched roofs, the ricks of corn, the haystacks, and the barns fell in and crackled like rockets, while the sky looked as if it was illuminated by an aurora borealis. Fresquyl's mill was smoking,

* Written before universal service was obligatory, and when soldiers were selected by conscription, a certain proportion of those who drew high numbers being exempt from service.

and its calcined ruins were reflected on the deep water. The sheep and cows were running about the fields in terror, the dogs were howling, and the women were sitting on the broken furniture, crying and wringing their hands. At this time Margot was abandoning herself to her lover's ardent caresses, and with her arms round his neck she said to him, tenderly:

"You see that I have kept my promise. I set fire to the mill so that I might be able to get out. So much the worse if all have suffered. But I do not care as long as you love me, are happy with me!"

And pointing to the fire, which was still burning fiercely in the distance, she added with a burst of savage laughter:

"Tiennou, we shall not have such beautiful tapers at our wedding Mass when you come back from your regiment!"

And thus it was that for the second time Margot Fresquyl yielded to the mortal sin of love.

THE ACCENT

IT WAS a large sheltered house, with long white terraces shaded by vines, from which one could see the sea. Large pines stretched a dark arch over the ruined *façade*, and there was a look of neglect, of want, and wretchedness about the place, such as irreparable losses, departure to other countries, and death leave behind them. The interior wore a strange look, with half unpacked trunks serving for wardrobes, with piles of bandboxes, and for seats an array of worm-eaten armchairs, into which bits of velvet and silk, cut from old dresses, had been patched at random. Along the walls there were rows of rusty nails which made one think of old portraits and of pictures full of family history, which had one by one been sold for a song to some second-hand furniture broker.

The rooms were in disorder and furnished at random, while velvets hanging from the ceilings and in the corners seemed to show that as the servants were no longer paid except by promises, they no longer did

more than occasionally give them an accidental, careless touch with the duster. The drawing-room, which was extremely large, was full of useless knick-knacks, the sort of rubbish which is put up for sale at stalls at watering-places, daubs—they could not be called paintings—of portraits and of flowers, and an old piano with yellow keys.

Such is the home where she who had been called the handsome Madame de Maurillac was spending her monotonous existence, like some unfortunate doll which inconstant, childish hands have thrown into a corner in a loft—she who had almost passed for a professional seductress, and whose coquetries, at least so the faithful ones of the Party said, had been able to excite a passing and last spark of desire in the dull eyes of the Emperor.

Like many others, she and her husband had waited for his return from Elba, had discounted a fresh, immediate chance, had kept up boldly and spent the remains of fortune in the game of luxury.

On the day when the illusion vanished, and he was forced to awake from his dream, Monsieur de Maurillac, without considering that he was leaving his wife and daughter behind him almost penniless, and not strong enough morally to make up his mind to come down in the world, to vegetate, to fight creditors, to accept some sinecure, poisoned himself, like a shopgirl forsaken by her lover.

Madame de Maurillac did not mourn for him. As this lamentable event had made her interesting, and as she was assisted and supported by unexpected acts of kindness, and had a good adviser in one of those old Parisian lawyers who can extricate you out of

the worst difficulties, she managed to save something from the wreck, and to keep a small income. Then reassured and emboldened, and resting her ultimate illusions and her frail hopes on her daughter's radiant beauty, she prepared for that last game in which they would risk everything, and hoping also that she might herself marry again, the ancient flirt arranged a double existence.

For months and months she would disappear from the world, and, as a pretext for her isolation and for hiding herself in the country, alleged her daughter's delicate health, and the important interests she had to look after in the South of France.

Her frivolous friends looked upon this as a great act of heroism, as something almost superhuman, and so courageous, that they tried to distract her by their incessant letters, and religiously informed her of all the scandals and love adventures that came to light in the suburbs as well as in the apotheosis of the capital.

The difficult struggle which Madame de Maurillac had to keep up in order to maintain her rank was really as fine as any campaign in the twilight of defeat, a slow retreat where men only give way inch by inch, fighting until the last cartridge is expended or fresh troops arrive, to bar the way to the enemy, and save the threatened flag.

Broken in by the same discipline, and haunted by the same dream, mother and daughter lived on almost nothing in the dull, dilapidated house which the peasants called the château, and economized like poor people who only have a few hundred francs a year to live on. But Fabienne de Maurillac developed well in

spite of everything, and grew up into a woman—like some rare flower preserved from all contact with the outer air and reared in a hothouse.

In order that she might not lose her Parisian accent by speaking too much with the servants, who had remained peasants though in livery, Madame de Maurillac, who had not been able to bring a lady's maid with her, on account of the extra cost which traveling expenses and wages would have entailed, and who, moreover, was afraid that some indiscretion might betray her maneuver and cover her with ridicule, made up her mind to wait on her daughter herself. And Fabienne talked with nobody but her, saw nobody but her, and was like a little novice in a convent. Nobody was allowed to speak to her, or to interfere with her walks in the large garden, or on the white terraces that were reflected in the blue water.

As soon, however, as the season for the country and the seaside came, they packed up their trunks, and locked the doors of their house of exile. As they were not known, and took those terrible trains which stop at every station, by which you arrive at your destination in the middle of the night, with the certainty that nobody will be waiting for you and see you get out of the carriage, they traveled third class, so that they might have a few bank notes the more with which to make a show.

A fortnight in Paris in the family house at Auteuil, a fortnight in which to try on dresses and bonnets and to show themselves, and then Trouville, Aix, or Biarritz, the whole show complete, with parties succeeding parties, money spent as if they did not know

its value, balls at the Casinos, constant flirtations, compromising intimacies with that kind of admirers who immediately surround two pretty women, one in the radiant beauty of her eighteen years, and the other in the brightness of that maturity which the beautiful September days bring with them.

Unfortunately, however, they had to do the same thing over again every year, and as if bad luck were continuing to follow them implacably, Madame de Maurillac and her daughter did not succeed in their endeavors, did not manage during the usual absence from home to make some eligible bachelor fall in love immediately, and ask for Fabienne's hand. Consequently, they were very unhappy. Their energies flagged, and their courage left them, like water that escapes, drop by drop, through a crack in a jug. They grew low-spirited, and no longer dared to be open toward each other and to exchange confidences and projects.

Fabienne, with her pale cheeks, her large eyes with blue circles round them, and her closed lips, looked like a captive princess tormented by constant *ennui*, who is troubled by evil suggestions, and dreams of flight and of escape from the prison where Fate holds her captive.

One night, when the sky was covered with heavy thunderclouds and the heat was most oppressive, Madame de Maurillac called to her daughter, whose room was next to hers. After calling her loudly for some time in vain, she sprang out of bed in fright and almost broke open the door with her trembling hands. The room was empty, and the pillows untouched.

Then, half mad and foreseeing some irreparable misfortune, the poor woman ran all over the large house, and rushed out into the garden, where the air was heavy with the scent of flowers. She acted like some wild animal that is pursued by a pack of hounds, trying to penetrate the darkness with her anxious looks, and gasping as if some one were holding her by the throat. Suddenly she staggered, uttered a painful cry, and fell down in a fit.

There, before her in the shadow of the myrtle-trees, Fabienne was sitting on the knees of a man—of the gardener—with both her arms round his neck, kissing him ardently. As if to defy her, and to show her how vain all her precautions and her vigilance had been, the girl was telling her lover, *in the country dialect*, and in a cooing and delightful voice, how she adored him and belonged to him.

Madame de Maurillac is in a lunatic asylum, and Fabienne has married the gardener.

Could she have done better?

PROFITABLE BUSINESS

HE CERTAINLY did not think himself a saint, nor did he put forth any hypocritical pretensions to virtue. Nevertheless, he thought as highly of himself as he did of anybody else, perhaps, even a trifle more highly. And that, quite impartially, without any more self-love than was necessary, and without having to accuse himself of being self-conceited. He did himself justice, that was all. He had good moral principles, and applied them, if the truth must be told, not only to judging the conduct of others, but also to the regulation of his own conduct, as he would have been very vexed if he had not been able to think of himself:

"On the whole, I am what people call a perfectly honorable man."

Luckily, he had never (oh! never) been obliged to doubt the excellent opinion he had of himself, an opinion which he liked to express thus, in moments of rhetorical expansion:

"My whole life gives me the right to shake hands with myself."

A subtle psychologist would perhaps have found some flaws in his mailed self-righteousness, sanctimoniously satisfied with itself. For example, it was quite certain that our friend had no scruples in making profit out of the vices or misfortunes of his neighbors, provided that he was not, in his own opinion, the person who was solely or chiefly responsible for them. But on the whole this was only one way of looking at it, and there was plenty of material for casuistic argument on the point. This sort of discussion is particularly unpleasant to such simple natures as this worthy fellow's. He would probably have said to the psychologist:

"Why go on a wild-goose chase? You can see that I am perfectly sincere."

Do not believe, however, that this perfect sincerity prevented him from having elevated views. He prided himself on having a weakness for imagination and the unforeseen, and though he would have been offended at being called a dishonorable man, he would, perhaps, have been still more hurt if anybody had accused him of middle-class tastes.

As to affairs of the heart he expressed a most virtuous horror of adultery, for if guilty of that he would not have been able to bear that testimony to himself, which was so sweet to his conscience:

"Ah! I rejoice to say that I never wronged anybody!"

On the other hand, he was not satisfied with pleasures which are paid for by the hour, and which debase *the noblest desires of the heart* to the vulgar

satisfaction of a physical requirement. What he required, he used to say, while lifting his eyes up to heaven, was:

"I crave for something more ideal than that!"

The search after the ideal did not, indeed, cost him any great effort. It was limited to shunning licensed houses of ill-fame, and to avoiding street-walkers.

It consisted chiefly in trying to be gallant with women, in trying to persuade himself that they liked him for his own sake, and in preferring those whose manner, dress, and looks allowed room for suppositions and romantic illusions, such as:

"She might be taken for a little work-girl, who is still virtuous." "No, I rather think she is a widow, who has met with misfortune." "What if she be a fashionable lady in disguise!" And other silly sayings, which he knew were nonsense, when he uttered them, but the imaginary flavor of which was very pleasant to him all the same.

With such tastes, it was only natural that this epicure should follow and jostle women in the large shops, and wherever there was a crowd, and that he should especially look out for ladies of easy virtue, for nothing is more exciting than half-closed shutters, behind which a face is indistinctly seen, and from which one hears a furtive call.

He would say to himself: "Who is she? Is she young and pretty? Is she some old woman, who is skillful at her business, but who does not venture to show herself any longer? Or is she some beginner, who has not yet acquired the boldness of an old hand? In any case, it is the unknown: perhaps, my

ideal—at least during the time it takes me to find my way upstairs." And as he went up, his heart always beat as it does at a first meeting with a woman beloved.

But he had never felt such a delicious shiver as he did on the day on which he penetrated into that old house in the blind alley in Ménilmontant. He did not know why, for he had often gone after so-called love in much stranger places; but now, without any reason, he had the presentiment that he was about to meet with an adventure, and that gave him a delightful sensation.

The woman who had beckoned to him lived on the third floor. All the way upstairs his excitement increased, and his heart was beating violently when he reached the landing. As he was going up, he smelled a peculiar odor, which grew stronger and stronger, and though he tried to analyze it, all he could decide was that it smelled like a chemist's shop.

The door on the right, at the end of the passage, was opened as soon as he put his foot on the landing, and the woman said, in a low voice:

"Come in, my dear."

A very strong smell met his nostrils through the open door, and he exclaimed:

"How stupid I was! I know what it is now; carbolic acid, is it not?"

"Yes," the woman replied. "Don't you like it, my dear? It is very wholesome, you know."

The woman was not ugly, although not young; she had very good eyes, although these were sad and sunken in her head. Evidently she had been crying

very much quite recently, and that imparted a special spice to the vague smile she put on, so as to appear more amiable.

Seized by his romantic ideas, and under the influence of the presentiment which he had had just before, he thought—and the idea filled him with pleasure—

"She is some widow, whom poverty has forced to sell herself."

The room was small, but very clean and tidy, which confirmed him in his conjecture, and as he was curious to verify it, he went into the three rooms, which opened into one another. The bedroom came first; next came a sort of drawing-room, and then a dining-room which evidently served as a kitchen, for a Dutch tiled stove stood in the middle of it, on which a stew was simmering. The smell of carbolic acid was even stronger in that room. He remarked it, and added with a laugh:

"Do you put it in your soup?"

And as he said this, he grasped the handle of the door which led into the next room, for he wanted to see everything, even that nook, which was apparently a store cupboard. But the woman seized him by the arm, and pulled him violently back.

"No, no," she said, almost in a whisper, and in a hoarse and suppliant voice; "no, dear, not there, not there, you must not go in there."

"Why?" said he, for his wish to go in was now stronger.

"Because if you go in there, you will have no inclination to remain with me, and I want you to stay. If you only knew!"

"Well, what?" And with a violent movement, he opened the glazed door. The smell of carbolic acid seemed almost to strike him in the face, and what he saw made him recoil still more, for on a small iron bedstead lay the dead body of a woman fantastically illuminated by a single wax candle. In horror he turned to escape.

"Stop, my dear," the woman sobbed; and clinging to him she told him amid a flood of tears that her friend had died two days previously, and that there was no money to bury her. Said she, "You can understand that I want it to be a respectable funeral, we were so very fond of each other! Stop here, my dear, do stop. I only want ten francs more. Don't go away."

They had gone back into the bedroom, and she was trying to detain him:

"No," he said, "let me go. I will give you the ten francs, but I will not stay here; I cannot."

He took his purse out of his pocket, extracted a ten-franc piece, put it on the table, and then went to the door. When he had reached it, a thought suddenly struck him, as if somebody were reasoning with him, without his knowledge.

"Why lose these ten francs? Why not profit by this woman's good intentions. She certainly behaved pluckily, and if I had not known about the matter, I should certainly not have gone away for some time. Well then?"

Then other and obscurer suggestions whispered to him:

"She was her friend! They were so fond of each other! Was it friendship or love? Oh! love appar-

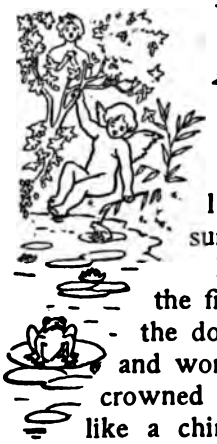
ently. Well, it would really be avenging morality, if this woman were forced to be faithless to that monstrous love." Then he turned round to her and said in a low and trembling voice: "Look here! If I give you twenty francs instead of ten, I suppose you could buy some flowers for her, as well?"

The unhappy woman's face brightened with pleasure and gratitude.

"Will you really give me twenty?"

"Yes," he replied, "and more perhaps. It quite depends upon yourself."

BERTHA



My old friend—one has friends occasionally who are much older than oneself—my old friend Doctor Bonnet had often invited me to spend some time with him at Riom, and as I did not know Auvergne, I made up my mind to go there in the summer of 1876.

I got there by the morning train, and the first person I saw on the platform was the doctor. He was dressed in a gray suit, and wore a soft, black, wide-brimmed, high-crowned felt hat, which was narrow at the top like a chimney pot, a hat which hardly anyone except an Auvergnat would wear, and which smacked of the charcoal-burner. Dressed like that, the doctor had the appearance of an old young man, with a spare body under a thin coat, and a large head covered with white hair.

He embraced me with that evident pleasure which country people feel when they meet long expected friends, and stretching out his arm said proudly: "This is Auvergne!"

I saw nothing before me, except a range of mountains, whose summits, which resembled truncated cones, must have been extinct volcanoes.

Then, pointing to the name of the station, he said:

"*Riom*, the fatherland of magistrates, the pride of the magistracy, ought rather to be the fatherland of doctors."

"Why?" I asked.

"Why?" he replied with a laugh. "If you transpose the letters, you have the Latin word *mori*, to die. That is the reason why I settled here, my young friend."

And delighted at his own joke, he carried me off, rubbing his hands.

As soon as I had swallowed a cup of coffee, he made me go and see the town. I admired the chemist's house, and the other celebrated houses, which were all black, but as pretty as knickknacks, with their *façades* of sculptured stone. I admired the statue of the Virgin, the patroness of butchers, and he told me an amusing story about this, which I will relate some other time. Then Doctor Bonnet said to me:

"I must beg you to excuse me for a few minutes while I go and see a patient, and then I will take you to Chatel-Guyon, so as to show you the general aspect of the town, and all the mountain chain of the Puy-de-Dôme, before lunch. You can wait for me outside; I shall only go upstairs and come down immediately."

He left me outside one of those old, gloomy, silent, melancholy houses which one sees in the provinces. This one appeared to look particularly sinister,

and I soon discovered the reason. All the large windows on the first floor were half boarded up with wooden shutters. The upper part of them alone could be opened, as if one had wished to prevent the people who were locked up in that huge stone trunk from looking into the street.

When the doctor came down again, I told him how it had struck me, and he replied:

"You are quite right; the poor creature who is living there must never see what is going on outside. She is a madwoman, or rather an idiot, what you Normans would call a *Niente.** It is a miserable story, but a very singular pathological case at the same time. Shall I tell you of it?"

I begged him to do so, and he continued:

"Twenty years ago, the owners of this house, who were my patients, had a daughter who was seemingly like all other girls. But I soon discovered that while her body became admirably developed, her intellect remained stationary.

"She began to walk very early, but could not talk. At first I thought she was deaf, but discovered that although she heard perfectly, she did not understand anything that was said to her. Violent noises made her start and frightened her, without her understanding how they were caused.

"She grew up into a superb woman, but she was dumb, from an absolute want of intellect. I tried all means to introduce a gleam of sense into her head, but nothing succeeded. I thought that I noticed that she knew her nurse, though as soon as she was

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*A *Nothing*, *i. e.*, an idiot.

weaned, she failed to recognize her mother. She could never pronounce that word, which is the first that children utter, and the last which men murmur when dying on the field of battle. She sometimes tried to talk, but produced nothing but incoherent sounds.

"When the weather was fine, she laughed continually, emitting low cries which might be compared to the twittering of birds. When it rained she cried and moaned in a mournful, terrifying manner, like the howling of a dog when death occurs in a house.

"She was fond of rolling on the grass, like young animals do, and of running about madly. She used to clap her hands every morning when the sun shone into her room, and would jump out of bed and insist, by signs, on being dressed as quickly as possible, so that she might get out.

"She did not appear to distinguish between people, between her mother and her nurse, or between her father and me, or between the coachman and the cook. I liked her parents, who were very unhappy on her account, very much, and went to see them nearly every day. I dined with them tolerably frequently, which enabled me to remark that Bertha (they had called her Bertha) seemed to recognize the various dishes, and to prefer some to others. At that time she was twelve years old, but as fully formed in figure as a girl of eighteen, and taller than I was. Then, the idea struck me of developing her greediness, and by such means to try and produce some slight power of discernment into her mind—to force her, by the diversity of flavors, if not by reason, to arrive at instinctive distinctions, which would of

themselves constitute a species of analysis akin to thought. Later on, by appealing to her senses, and by carefully making use of those which could serve us, we might hope to obtain a kind of reaction on her intellect, and by degrees increase the involuntary action of her brain.

"One day I put two plates before her, one of soup, and the other of very sweet vanilla cream. I made her taste each of them successively, then I let her choose for herself, and she ate the plate of cream. In a short time I made her very greedy, so greedy that it appeared as if the only idea she had in her head was the desire for eating. She recognized the various dishes perfectly, stretched out her hands toward those that she liked, and took hold of them eagerly, crying when they were taken from her. Then I thought I would try and teach her to come to the dining-room, when the dinner bell rang. It took a long time, but I succeeded in the end. In her vacant intellect, there was a fixed correlation between the sound and her taste, a correspondence between two senses, an appeal from one to the other, and consequently a sort of connection of ideas, —if one can term an instinctive hyphen between two organic functions an idea,—and so I carried my experiments further, and taught her, with much difficulty, to recognize meal-times on the face of the clock.

"It was impossible for me for a long time to attract her attention to the hands, but I succeeded in making her remark the clockwork and the striking apparatus. The means I employed were very simple. I asked them not to have the bell rung for lunch,

but that everybody should get up and go into the dining-room when the little brass hammer struck twelve o'clock; but I found great difficulty in making her learn to count the strokes. She ran to the door each time she heard the clock strike, but by degrees she learned that all the strokes had not the same value as regarded meals, and she frequently fixed her eyes, guided by her ears, on the dial of the clock.

"When I noticed that, I took care, every day at twelve and at six o'clock, to place my fingers on the figures twelve and six, as soon as the moment she was waiting for, had arrived. I soon noticed that she attentively followed the motion of the small brass hands, which I had often turned in her presence.

"She had understood! Perhaps I should rather say that she had seized the idea. I had succeeded in getting the knowledge, or rather the sensation of the time into her, just as is the case with carp, who certainly have no clocks, but know that they are fed every day at a certain time.

"When once I had obtained that result, all the clocks and watches in the house occupied her attention almost exclusively. She spent her time in looking at them, in listening to them, and in waiting for meal-times, and once something very funny happened. The striking apparatus of a pretty little Louis XVI. clock that hung at the head of her bed had got out of order, and she noticed it. She sat for twenty minutes, with her eyes on the hands, waiting for it to strike ten, but when the hand passed the figure, she was astonished at not hearing anything. So stupefied was she, indeed, that she sat down, no doubt overwhelmed by a feeling of violent emotion,

such as attacks us in the face of some terrible catastrophe. She had the wonderful patience to wait until eleven o'clock, in order to see what would happen, but, as she naturally heard nothing, she was suddenly either seized with a wild fit of rage at having been deceived and imposed upon by appearances, or else was overcome by the fear which a frightened creature feels at some terrible mystery, or by the furious impatience of a passionate individual who meets with some obstacle. She took up the tongs from the fireplace, and struck the clock so violently that she broke it to pieces in a moment.

"It was evident, therefore, that her brain did act and calculate, obscurely it is true, and within very restricted limits, for I could never succeed in making her distinguish persons as she distinguished the time. To stir her intellect, it was necessary to appeal to her passions, in the material sense of the word, and we soon had another, and alas! a very terrible proof of this!

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"She had grown up into a splendid girl; a perfect type of a race, a sort of lovely and stupid Venus. She was sixteen, and I have rarely seen such perfection of form, such suppleness, and such regular features. I said she was a Venus; yes, a fair, stout, vigorous Venus, with large, bright, vacant eyes, blue as the flowers of the flax plant. She had a large mouth with full lips, the mouth of a glutton, of a sensualist, a mouth made for kisses. Well, one morning her father came into my consulting-room, with a strange look on his face, and sitting down, without even replying to my greeting, he said:

"'I want to speak to you about a very serious matter. Would it be possible—would it be possible for Bertha to marry?'

"'Bertha to marry! Why, it is quite impossible!'

"'Yes, I know, I know,' he replied. 'But reflect, doctor—don't you think—perhaps—we hoped—if she had children—it would be a great shock to her, but a great happiness, and who knows whether maternity might not rouse her intellect?'

"I was in a state of great perplexity. He was right, and it was possible that such a new situation, and that wonderful instinct of maternity which beats in the hearts of the lower animals as it does in the heart of a woman, which makes a hen fly at a dog's jaws to defend her chickens, might bring about a revolution, an utter change in her vacant mind, and set the motionless mechanism of her thoughts into movement. And then, moreover, I immediately remembered a personal instance. Some years previously I had possessed a spaniel bitch which was so stupid that I could do nothing with her, but when she had had pups she became, if not exactly clever, yet as intelligent as many other dogs who have not been thoroughly broken.

"As soon as I foresaw the possibility of this, the wish to get Bertha married grew on me, not so much out of friendship for her and her poor parents, as from scientific curiosity. What would happen? It was a singular problem, and I said to her father:

"'Perhaps you are right. You might make the attempt—but—but you will never find a man to consent to marry her.'

"'I have found somebody,' he said in a low voice.

"I was dumfounded, and said: 'Somebody really suitable? Some one of your own rank and position in society?'

"'Decidedly,' he replied.

"'Oh! And may I ask his name?'

"'I came on purpose to tell you and to consult you. It is Monsieur Gaston du Boys de Lucelles.'

"I felt inclined to exclaim: 'What a wretch,' but I held my tongue, and after a few moments' silence, I said:

"'Oh! Very good. I see nothing against it.'

"The poor man shook me heartily by the hand, and said:

"'She is to be married next month.'

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"Monsieur Gaston du Boys de Lucelles was a scapegrace of good family, who, after having spent all that he had inherited from his father, and having incurred debts by all kinds of doubtful means, had been trying to discover some other way of obtaining money. Hence this method. He was a good-looking young fellow, and in capital health, but fast—one of that odious tribe of provincial fast men—and appeared to me to be the sort of a husband who could be got rid of later, by making him an allowance. He came to the house to pay his addresses, and to strut about before the idiot girl, who, however, seemed to please him. He brought her flowers, kissed her hands, sat at her feet, and looked at her with affectionate eyes; but she took no notice of any of his attentions, and made no distinction between him and the other persons about her.

"However, the marriage took place, and you may guess how excited my curiosity was. I went to see Bertha the next day, to try and discover from her looks whether any feelings had been roused in her, but I found her just the same as she was every day, wholly taken up with the clock and dinner, while he, on the contrary, appeared really in love, and tried to rouse his wife's spirits and affection by little endearments and such caresses as one bestows on a kitten. He could think of nothing better.

"I called upon the married couple pretty frequently, and I soon perceived that the young woman knew her husband, and gave him those eager looks which she had hitherto only bestowed on sweet dishes.

"She followed his movements, knew his step on the stairs or in the neighboring rooms and clapped her hands when he came in. Her face was changed and brightened by the flames of profound happiness and of desire. She loved him with her whole body and with all her being, to the very depths of her poor, weak soul, and with all her heart, the poor heart of some grateful animal. It was really a delightful and innocent picture of simple passion, of carnal and yet modest passion, such as nature planted in mankind, before man complicated and disfigured it by all the various shades of sentiment. But he soon grew tired of this ardent, beautiful, dumb creature, and did not spend more than an hour a day with her, thinking it sufficient to devote his nights to her, and she began to suffer in consequence. She used to wait for him from morning till night, with her eyes on the clock. She did not even look after the meals now, for he took all his away from home, Clermont,

Chatel-Guyon, Royat, no matter where, as long as he was not obliged to come home.

"She began to grow thin; every other thought, every other wish, every other expectation, and every other confused hope disappeared from her mind, and the hours during which she did not see him became hours of terrible suffering to her. Soon he used frequently not to come home at night; he spent them with women at the Casino at Royat, and did not come home until daybreak. But she never went to bed before he returned. She would remain sitting motionless in an easy-chair, with her eyes fixed on the clock, which turned so slowly and regularly round the china face on which the hours were painted.

"When she heard the trot of his horse in the distance, she would sit up with a start. When he came into the room, she would get up with the movements of a phantom, and point to the clock, as if to say to him: 'Look how late it is!'

"He began to be afraid of this amorous and jealous, half-witted woman, and flew into a rage, like brutes do; and one night he even went so far as to strike her, so they sent for me. When I arrived she was writhing and screaming in a terrible crisis of pain, anger, passion, how do I know what? Can anyone tell what goes on in such undeveloped brains?

"I calmed her by subcutaneous injections of morphine, and forbade her to see that man again, for I saw clearly that marriage would infallibly kill her, by degrees.

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"Then she went mad! Yes, my dear friend, that idiot has gone mad. She is always thinking of him

and waiting for him; she waits for him all day and night, awake or asleep, at this very moment, ceaselessly. When I saw her getting thinner and thinner, never taking her eyes off the clocks, I had them removed from the house. I thus make it impossible for her to count the hours, or to remember, from her indistinct reminiscences, at what time he used to come home. I hope to destroy the recollection of it in time, and to extinguish that ray of thought which I had kindled with so much difficulty.

"The other day I tried an experiment. I offered her my watch. She took it and looked at it for some time; then she began to scream terribly, as if the sight of that little object had suddenly aroused her recollection, which was beginning to grow indistinct. She is pitiably thin now, with hollow and brilliant eyes, and she walks up and down ceaselessly, like a wild beast does in its cage. I have had bars put to the windows, and have had the seats fixed to the floor, so as to prevent her from looking to see whether he is coming.

"Oh! her poor parents! What a life they must lead!"

We had got to the top of the hill, and the doctor turned round and said to me:

"Look at Riom from here."

The gloomy town looked like some ancient city. Behind it, a green, wooded plain studded with towns and villages, and bathed in a soft blue haze, extended until it was lost in the distance. Far away, on my right, there was a range of lofty mountains with round summits, or truncated cones, and the doctor began to enumerate the villages, towns, and hills, and

to give me the history of all of them. But I did not listen to him; I was thinking of nothing but the mad woman, and only saw her. She seemed to be hovering over that vast extent of country like a mournful ghost, and I asked him abruptly:

"What has become of the husband?"

My friend seemed rather surprised, but after a few moments' hesitation, he replied:

"He is living at Royat, on an allowance that they make him, and is quite happy; he leads a very fast life."

As we were going slowly back, both of us silent and rather low-spirited, an English dogcart, drawn by a thoroughbred horse, came up behind us and passed us rapidly. The doctor took me by the arm:

"There he is," he said.

I saw nothing except a gray felt hat, cocked over one ear, above a pair of broad shoulders, driving off in a cloud of dust.

THE LAST STEP

MONSIEUR DE SAINT-JUÉRY would not have deceived his old mistress for anything in the world. Perhaps it was from an instinctive fear, for he had heard of adventures that turn out badly, make a scandal, and bring about hateful family quarrels, crises from which one emerges enervated and exasperated with destiny, and, as it were, with the weight of a cannon-ball on one's feet. Perhaps also from his need for a calm, sheep-like existence, undisturbed by any shock; perhaps from the remnants of the love which had made him, during the first years of their connection, the slave of the proud domineering beauty, and of her enthralling charms.

He kept out of the way of temptation almost timidly, was faithful to her, and was as submissive as a spaniel. He paid her every attention, did not appear to notice that the outlines of her figure, which had formerly been so harmonious and supple,

were getting too full and puffy, that her face, which used to remind him of a blush rose, was getting wrinkled, and that her eyes were getting dull. He admired her in spite of everything, almost blindly, and clothed her with imaginary charms, with an autumnal beauty, with the majestic and serene softness of an October twilight, and with the last blossoms which fall to the walks strewn with dead leaves.

But although their connection had lasted for many years, though they were as closely bound to each other as if they had been married, and although Charlotte Guindal pestered him with entreaties, and upset him with continual quarrels on the subject, despite also the fact that he believed her to be absolutely faithful to him and worthy of his most perfect confidence and love, Monsieur de Saint-Juéry had never been able to make up his mind to give her his name, and to put their connection on a legal footing.

He really suffered from this, but remained firm and defended his position, quibbled, sought for subterfuges, and replied by the eternal and vague: "What would be the good of it?" This made Charlotte furious and caused her to say angry and ill-tempered things. But he remained passive and listless, with his back bent like a restive horse under the whip.

He asked her whether it was really necessary to their happiness, as they had no children. Did not everybody think that they were married? Was not she everywhere called Madame de Saint-Juéry and had their servants any doubt that they were in the service of respectable, married people? Was not the name which had been transmitted to a man from

father to son, unstained, honored, and often with a halo of glory round it, a sacred trust, which no one had a right to touch? What would she gain if she bore it legitimately? Did she for a moment suppose that she would rise higher in people's estimation and be admitted into society, or that people would forget that she had been his regular mistress before becoming his wife? Did not everybody know that formerly, before he rescued her from that Bohemian life in which she had been vainly waiting for a chance, and was losing her good looks, Charlotte Guindal frequented all the public balls, and showed her legs liberally at the Moulin-Rouge?*

Charlotte knew his crabbed though kindly character—a character at the same time logical and obstinate—too well to hope that she would ever be able to overcome his opposition and scruples, except by some clever, feminine trick, some piece of comedy. So she appeared to be satisfied with his reasons and to renounce her desire. Outwardly she showed an equable and conciliatory temper, and no longer worried Monsieur de Saint-Juéry with her recriminations. Thus time went by, in calm monotony, without fruitless battles or fierce disputes.

Charlotte Guindal's medical man was Doctor Rabatel, one of those clever men who appear to know everything, but whom a country surgeon would shame by a few questions. He was one of those men who wish to impress everybody with their apparent value, and who make use of their medical knowledge as if it were some productive commercial house, which

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*A *café chantant* and casino.

carried on a suspicious business; who can scent out persons whom they can manage as they please, as if they were a piece of wax, keeping them in a state of continual terror by holding the idea of death constantly before their eyes.

Having obtained this mastery they scrutinize their patients' consciences as well as the cleverest priest could do, make sure of being well paid for their complicity as soon as they have obtained a footing anywhere, and find out the family secrets in order to use them as a weapon for extorting money on occasions.

Dr. Rabatel felt sure immediately that this middle-aged lady wanted something of him. By some extraordinary perversion of taste, he was rather fond of the remains of a good-looking woman, if they were well got up, and offered to him. He liked that nigh flavor which arises from soft lips made tender through years of love, from gray hair powdered with gold, from a body engaged in its last struggle, which dreams of one more victory before abdicating power altogether. So he did not hesitate to become his new patient's lover.

When winter came, however, a thorough change took place in Charlotte's health, which had hitherto been so good. She had no strength left, she felt ill after the slightest exertion, complained of internal pains, and spent whole days lying on the couch, with set eyes and without uttering a word, so that everybody thought that she was dying of one of those mysterious maladies which cannot be coped with, but by degrees undermine the whole human system. It was sad to see her sinking, lying motionless on her

pillows. A mist seemed to have come over her eyes, her hands lay helplessly on the bed, and her mouth seemed sealed by some invisible finger. Monsieur de Saint-Juéry was in despair; he cried like a child, and he winced as if somebody had plunged a knife into him when the doctor said to him in his unctuous voice:

"I know that you are a brave man, my dear sir, and I may venture to tell you the whole truth. Madame de Saint-Juéry is doomed, irrevocably doomed. Nothing but a miracle can save her, and alas! there are no miracles in these days. The end is only a question of a few hours, and may come quite suddenly."

Monsieur de Saint-Juéry had thrown himself into a chair, and was sobbing bitterly, covering his face with his hands.

"My poor dear, my poor darling," he said, through his tears.

"Pray compose yourself, and be brave," the doctor continued, sitting down by his side, "for I have something serious to say to you, and to convey to you our poor patient's last wishes. A few minutes ago, she told me the secret of your double life, and of your connection with her. In view of death, which she feels approaching rapidly, for she is under no delusion, the unhappy woman wishes to die at peace with Heaven, with the consolation of having corrected her equivocal position and of having become your wife."

Monsieur de Saint-Juéry sat upright, with a bewildered look, while he moved his hands nervously; in his grief he was incapable of manifesting any will of his own, or of opposing this unexpected attack.

"Oh! anything that Charlotte wishes, doctor; anything, and I will myself go and tell her so, on my knees!"

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The wedding took place discreetly, with something funereal about it, in the darkened room, where the words which were spoken had a strange sound, almost of anguish. Charlotte, who was lying in bed, her eyes dilated through happiness, had put both trembling hands into those of Monsieur de Saint-Juéry, and she seemed to expire with the word "Yes" on her lips. The doctor looked at the moving scene, grave and impassive, his chin buried in his white cravat, and his two arms resting on the mantelpiece, while his eyes twinkled behind his glasses.

The next week, Madame de Saint-Juéry began to get better, and that wonderful recovery, about which Monsieur Saint-Juéry with effusive gratitude tells everybody who will listen to him, has so increased Doctor Rabatel's reputation that at the next election he will be made a member of the Academy of Medicine.

A MESALLIANCE

IT IS a generally acknowledged truth that the prerogatives of the nobility are only maintained at the present time through the weakness of the middle classes. Many of these, who have established themselves and their families by their intellect, industry, and struggles, fall into a state of bliss, which reminds those who see it of intoxication, as soon as they are permitted to enter aristocratic circles, or can be seen in public with barons and counts, and above all, when these treat them in a friendly manner, no matter from what motive, or when they see a prospect of a daughter of theirs driving in a carriage with armorial bearings on the panels.

Many women and girls of the citizen class would not hesitate for a moment to refuse an honorable, good-looking man of their own class, in order to go to the altar with the oldest, ugliest, and stupidest dotard among the aristocracy.

I shall never forget saying in joke, shortly before her marriage, to a young, well-educated girl of a

wealthy, middle-class family, who had the figure and the bearing of a queen, not to forget an ermine cloak in her trousseau.

"I know it would suit me capitally," she replied in all seriousness, "and I should certainly have worn one, if I had married Baron R——, which I was nearly doing, as you know, but it is not suitable for the wife of a government official."

When a girl of the middle classes wanders from the paths of virtue, her fall may, as a rule, be rightly ascribed to her hankering after the nobility.

In a small German town there lived, some years ago, a tailor whom we will call Löwenfuss, a man who, like all knights of the shears, was equally full of aspirations after culture and liberty. After working for one master for some time as a poor journeyman, he married his daughter, and after his father-in-law's death succeeded to the business. As he was industrious, lucky, and managed it well, he soon grew very well off, and was in a position to give his daughters an education which many a nobleman's children might have envied. They learned not only French and music, but also acquired many more solid branches of knowledge, and as they were both pretty and charming girls, they soon became much thought of and sought after.

Fanny, the elder, was especially her father's pride and a favorite in society. She was of middle height, slim, with a thoroughly maidenly figure, and with an almost Italian face, in which two large, dark eyes seemed to ask for love and submission at the same time. Yet this girl with her plentiful, black hair was not in the least intended to command, for she was

one of those romantic women who will give themselves, or even throw themselves, away, but who can never be subjugated. A young physician fell in love with her, and wished to marry her; Fanny returned his love, and her parents gladly accepted him as a son-in-law. But she made it a condition that he should visit her freely and frequently for two years, before she would consent to become his wife, and she declared that she would not go to the altar with him until she was convinced that not only their hearts but also that their characters harmonized. He agreed to her wish, and became a regular visitor at the house of the educated tailor; they were happy hours for the lovers; they played, sang, and read together, and he told the girl some of his medical experiences which excited and moved her.

Just then, an officer went one day to the tailor's shop to order some civilian's clothes. This was not an unusual event in itself, but it was soon to be the cause of one; for accidentally the daughter of *the artist in clothes* came into the shop, just as the officer was leaving it. On seeing her, he paused and asked the tailor who the young lady was.

"My daughter," the tailor said, proudly.

"May I beg you to introduce me to the young lady, Herr Löwenfuss?" said the hussar.

"I feel flattered at the honor you are doing me," the tailor replied, with evident pleasure.

"Fanny, the captain wishes to make your acquaintance; this is my daughter Fanny, Captain—"

"Captain Count Kasimir W——," the hussar interrupted him, as he went up to the pretty girl, and paid her a compliment or two. They were very

commonplace, stale, everyday phrases, but in spite of this they pleased the girl, intelligent as she was, because it was a cavalry officer and a Count to boot who addressed them to her. And when at last the captain, in the most friendly manner, asked the tailor's permission to be allowed to visit at his house, both father and daughter granted it to him most readily.

The very next day Count W—— paid his visit, in full-dress uniform, and when Frau Löwenfuss made some observations about it, how handsome it was, and how well it became him, he told them that he should not wear it much longer, as he intended to quit the service soon, and to look for a wife in whom birth and wealth were matters of secondary consideration, while a good education and a knowledge of domestic matters were of paramount importance; adding that as soon as he had found one, he meant to retire to his estates.

From that moment, papa and mamma Löwenfuss looked upon the Count as their daughter's suitor. It is certain that he was madly in love with Fanny; he used to go to their house every evening, and made himself so liked by all of them that the young doctor soon felt himself to be superfluous, and so his visits became rarer and rarer. The Count confessed his love to Fanny on a moonlight night, while they were sitting in an arbor covered with honeysuckle, which formed nearly the whole of Herr Löwenfuss's garden. He swore that he loved, that he adored her, and when at last she lay trembling in his arms he tried to take her by storm. But that bold cavalry exploit did not succeed, and the good-looking hussar found out for the first time in his life that a woman can at

the same time be romantic, passionately in love, and virtuous.

The next morning the tailor called on the Count, and begged him very humbly to state what his intentions with regard to Fanny were. The enamored hussar declared that he was determined to make the tailor's little daughter Countess W——. Herr Löwenfuss was so much overcome by his feelings, that he showed great inclination to embrace his future son-in-law. The Count, however, laid down certain conditions. The whole matter must be kept a profound secret, for he had every prospect of inheriting half-a-million of florins,* on the death of an aunt who was already eighty years old, which he should risk by a *mésalliance.*

When they heard this, the girl's parents certainly hesitated for a time to give their consent to the marriage, but the handsome hussar, whose ardent passion carried Fanny away, at last gained the victory. The doctor received a pretty little note from the tailor's daughter, in which she told him that she gave him back his promise, as she had not found her ideal in him. Fanny then signed a deed, by which she formally renounced all claims to her father's property, in favor of her sister, and left her home and her father's house with the Count under cover of the night, in order to accompany him to Poland, where the marriage was to take place in his castle.

Of course malicious tongues declared that the hussar had abducted Fanny. But her parents smiled at such reports, for they knew better, and the moment

* About $250,000.

when their daughter would return as Countess W—— would amply recompense them for everything.

Meanwhile the Polish Count and the romantic German girl were being carried by the train through the dreary plains of Masovia.* They stopped in a large town to make some purchases, and the Count, who was very wealthy and liberal, provided his future wife with everything that befitted a Countess and a girl could fancy, and then they continued their journey. The country grew more picturesque but more melancholy as they went further east; the somber Carpathians rose from the snow-covered plains, and villages, surrounded by white glistening walls, and stunted willows stood by the side of the roads, ravens sailed through the white sky, and here and there a small peasants' sledge shot by, drawn by two thin horses.

At last they reached the station. There the Count's steward was waiting for them with a carriage and four, which brought them to their destination almost as swiftly as the iron steed.

The numerous servants were drawn up in the yard of the ancient castle to receive their master and mistress, and gave loud cheers for her, for which she thanked them smilingly. When she went into the dim, arched passages, and the large rooms, for a moment she felt a strange feeling of fear, but she quickly checked it, for was not her most ardent wish to be fulfilled in a couple of hours?

She put on her bridal attire, in which a half-comical, half-sinister looking old woman with a toothless mouth and a nose like an owl's assisted her.

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*A division of Poland, of which Warsaw is the capital.

Just as she was fixing the myrtle wreath on to her dark curls, the bell began to ring, which summoned her to her wedding. The Count himself, in full uniform, led her to the chapel of the castle, where the priest, with the steward and the castellan as witnesses, and the footmen in grand liveries, were awaiting the handsome young couple.

After the wedding, the marriage certificate was signed in the vestry, and a groom was sent to the station, where he dispatched a telegram to her parents, to the effect that the hussar had kept his word, and that Fanny Löwenfuss had become Countess Faniska W ——.

Then the newly-married couple sat down to a beautiful little dinner in company with the chaplain, the steward, and the castellan. The champagne made them all very cheerful, and at last the Count knelt down before his young and beautiful wife, boldly took her white satin slipper off her foot, filled it with wine, and emptied it to her health.

At length night came, a thorough, Polish wedding-night, and Faniska, who had just assumed a demi-toilette, was looking at herself with proud satisfaction in the great mirror that was fastened into the wall, from top to bottom. A white satin train flowed down behind her like rays from the moon, a half-open jacket of bright green velvet, trimmed with valuable ermine, covered her voluptuous, virgin bust and her classic arms, only to show them all the more seductively at the slightest motion, while the wealth of her dark hair, in which diamonds hung here and there like glittering dew-drops, fell down her neck and mingled with the white fur. The Count entered in a red velvet dressing-

gown trimmed with sable; at a sign from him, the old woman who was waiting on his divinity left the room, and the next moment he was lying like a slave at the feet of his lovely young wife, who raised him up and was pressing him to her heaving bosom, when a noise which she had never heard before, a wild howling, startled the loving woman in the midst of her bliss.

"What was that?" she asked, trembling.

The Count went to the window without speaking, and she with him, her arms round him. She looked half timidly, half curiously out into the darkness, where large bright spots were moving about in pairs, in the park at her feet.

"Are they will-o'-the-wisps?" she whispered.

"No, my child, they are wolves," the Count replied, fetching his double-barreled gun, which he loaded. Then he went out on the snow-covered balcony, while she drew the fur more closely over her bosom, and followed him.

"Will you shoot?" the Count asked her in a whisper, and when she nodded, he said: "Aim straight at the first pair of bright spots that you see; they are the eyes of those amiable brutes."

Then he handed her the gun and pointed it for her.

"That is the way—are you pointing straight?"

"Yes."

"Then fire."

A flash, a report, which the echo from the hills repeated four times, and two of the unpleasant looking lights had vanished.

Then the Count fired, and by that time their people were all awake; they drove away the wolves

with torches and shouts, and laid the two large animals, the spoils of a Polish wedding-night, at the feet of their young mistress.

The days that followed resembled that night. The Count showed himself a most attentive husband, his wife's knight and slave, and she felt quite at home in that dull castle. She rode, drove, smoked, read French novels, and beat her servants as well as any Polish Countess could have done. In the course of a few years, she presented the Count with two children, and although he appeared very happy at that, yet, like most husbands, he grew continually cooler, more indolent, and neglectful of her. From time to time he left the castle to see after his affairs in the capital, and the intervals between those journeys became continually shorter. Faniska felt that her husband was tired of her, and much as it grieved her, she did not let him notice it; she was always the same.

But at last the Count remained away altogether. At first he used to write, but at last the poor, weeping woman did not even receive letters to comfort her in her unhappy solitude, and his lawyer sent the money that she and the children required.

She conjectured, hoped, doubted, suffered, and wept for more than a year; then she suddenly went to the capital and appeared unexpectedly in his apartments. Painful explanations followed, until at last the Count told her that he no longer loved her, and would not live with her for the future. When she wished to make him do so by legal means, and intrusted her case to a celebrated lawyer, *the Count denied that she was his wife.* She produced her

marriage certificate, and lo! the most infamous fraud came to light. A confidential servant of the Count had acted the part of the priest, so that the tailor's beautiful daughter had, as a matter of fact, merely been the Count's mistress, and her children therefore were bastards.

The virtuous woman then saw, when it was too late, that it was *she* who had formed a ***mésalliance.*** Her parents would have nothing to do with her, and at last it came out that the Count was married long before he knew her, but that he did not live with his wife.

Then Fanny applied to the police magistrates; she wanted to appeal to justice, but was dissuaded from taking criminal proceedings; for although they would certainly lead to the punishment of her daring seducer, they would also bring about her own ruin.

At last, however, her lawyer effected a settlement between them, which was favorable to Fanny, and which she accepted for the sake of her children. The Count paid her a considerable sum down, and gave her the gloomy castle to live in. Thither she returned with a broken heart, and from that time lived alone, a sullen misanthrope, a fierce despot.

From time to time, you may meet wandering through the Carpathians a pale woman of almost unearthly beauty, wearing a magnificent sable-skin jacket and carrying a gun over her shoulder, in the forest, or in the winter in a sledge, driving her foaming horses until they nearly drop from fatigue, while the harness bells utter a melancholy sound, and at last die away in the distance, like the weeping of a solitary, deserted human heart.

AN HONEST IDEAL

AMONG my numerous friends in Vienna there is an author who has always amused me by his childish idealism.

Not by his idealism from an abstract point of view, for in spite of my pessimism I am an absurd idealist, and because I am perfectly well aware of this, I never, as a rule, laugh at other people's idealism. But his brand was really too funny.

He was a serious man of great capabilities who only just fell short of being learned. He had a clear, critical intellect; was a man without any illusions about society, the state, literature, or anything else, and especially about women; but he was the craziest optimist as soon as he got upon the subject of actresses, theatrical princesses, and heroines. He was one of those men who, like Hackländer, cannot discover the Ideal of Virtue anywhere but in a ballet girl.

My friend was always in love with some actress or other—of course only platonically—and by pref-

erence with some girl of rising talent, whose literary knight he constituted himself, until the time came when her admirers laid something much more substantial than laurel wreaths at her feet. Then he withdrew and sought for fresh talent which would allow itself to be patronized by him.

He was never without a photograph of his ideal in his breast pocket, and when he was in a good temper, he used to show me one or other of them—whom I had of course never seen—with a knowing smile. Once, when we were sitting in a *café* in the Prater, he took out a portrait without saying a word, and laid it on the table before me.

It was the portrait of a beautiful woman, but what struck me in it first of all, was not the almost classic cut of her features, but her white eyes.

"If she had not the black hair of a living woman, I should take her for a statue," I said.

"Certainly," my friend replied; "for a statue of Venus, perhaps for the Venus of Milo herself."

"Who is she?"

"A young actress."

"That is a matter of course in your case; what I meant was, what is her name?"

My friend told me. It was a name which is at present one of the best known on the German stage, a name with which a number of earthly adventures are connected, as every Viennese knows. Compared with hers those of Venus herself were but innocent toying, but I then heard of her for the first time.

My idealist described her as a woman of the highest talent—which I believed, and as an angel of purity—which I did not believe; on that particular

occasion, however, I at any rate did not believe the contrary.

A few days later, I was accidentally turning over the leaves of the portrait album of another intimate friend of mine, who was a thoroughly careless, somewhat dissolute Viennese, and I came across that strange, female face with the dead eyes again.

"How did you come by the picture of this Venus?" I asked him.

"Well, she certainly is a Venus," he replied, "but one of that cheap kind who are to be met with in the Graben,* which is their ideal grove."

"Impossible!"

"I give you my word of honor it is so."

I could say nothing more after that. So my intellectual friend's new ideal, that woman of the highest dramatic talent, that wonderful woman with the white eyes, was a street Venus!

But my friend was right in one respect. He had not deceived himself with regard to her wonderful dramatic gifts, and she very soon made a career for herself. From being a mute character on some suburban stage, she rose in two years to be the leading actress at one of the principal theaters.

My friend interested himself in her behalf with the manager of it, who was not blinded by any prejudices. She acted in a rehearsal, and pleased him; whereupon he sent her to star in the provinces. My friend accompanied her, and took care she was well puffed.

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*The street where most of the best shops are to be found, and much frequented by venal beauties.

She went on the boards as Schiller's "Marie Stuart," and achieved the most brilliant success. Before she had finished her starring tour, she obtained an engagement at a large theater in a northern town, where her appearance was the signal for a triumphant success.

Her reputation, that is her reputation as a most gifted actress, grew very high in less than a year, and the manager of the Court theater invited her to star there.

She was received with some doubt at first, but she soon overcame all prejudices and uncertainty; the applause grew more and more vehement at every performance, and at the close of the season her future was decided. She obtained a splendid engagement, and soon afterward became a leader at the Court theater.

A well-known author wrote a racy novel, of which she was the heroine; one of the leading bankers and financiers was at her feet; she was a most popular personage, and the lioness of the capital; she had splendid apartments, and all her surroundings were of the most luxurious character. She had reached that stage in her career at which my idealistic friend, who had constituted himself her literary knight, quietly took his leave of her, and went in search of fresh talent.

But the beautiful woman with the dead eyes and the dead heart seemed destined to be the scourge of the idealists, quite against her will. Scarcely had one spread his wings and flown away from her, than another fell out of the nest into her net.

A very young student, who was neither handsome nor of good family, and certainly not rich or

even well off, but who was enthusiastic, intellectual, and impressionable, saw her as "Marie Stuart," as "The Maid of Orléans," "The Lady with the Camelias," and in most of the plays of the best French dramatists, for the manager was making experiments with her, and she was doing the same with her talents.

The poor student was enraptured with the celebrated actress, and at the same time conceived a passion for the woman which bordered on madness.

He saved up penny by penny, he nearly starved himself, in order that he might be able to pay for a seat in the gallery whenever she acted, and be able to devour her with his eyes. He always got a seat in the front row, for he was always outside three hours before the doors opened, so as to be one of the first to gain his Olympus, the seat of the theatrical enthusiasts. He grew pale, and his heart beat violently when she appeared; he laughed when she laughed, shed tears when she wept, applauded her, as if he had been paid to do it by the highest favors that a woman can bestow, and yet she did not know him, and was ignorant of his very existence.

The regular frequenters of the Court theater noticed him at last, and spoke about his infatuation for her, until at last she heard about him. Still she did not know him, and although he could not send her any costly jewelry, not even a bouquet, he at last succeeded in attracting her attention.

When she had finished acting and the audience had gone home, she would leave the theater wrapped in valuable furs and get into the carriage of her banker, which was waiting for her at the stage door. He

always stood there, often up to his ankles in snow, or in the pouring rain.

At first she did not notice him, but when her maid said something to her in a whisper on one occasion, she looked round in surprise, and he got a look from those large eyes, which were not dead then, but dark and bright—a look which recompensed him for all his sufferings and filled him with a proud hope, which constantly gained more power over the young idealist, usually so modest.

At last there was a thorough, silent understanding between the theatrical princess and her dumb adorer. When she put her foot on the carriage step, she looked round at him, and every time he stood there, devouring her with his eyes; she saw it and got contentedly into her carriage, but she did not see how he ran after her carriage, or how he reached her house, panting for breath, when she did, or how he lay down outside after the door had closed behind her.

One stormy summer night, when the wind was howling in the chimneys, and the rain was beating against the windows and on the pavement, the poor student was again lying on the stone steps outside her house. The front door was opened very cautiously and quietly; for it was not the economical banker who was leaving the house, but a wealthy young officer whom the maid was letting out; he kissed the pretty little Cerberus as he put a gold coin into her hand, and then accidentally trod on the idealist, who was lying outside.

They all three simultaneously uttered a cry; the girl blew out the candle, the officer instinctively half drew his sword, and the student ran away.

Ever since that night, the poor, crazy fellow went about with a dagger, which he concealed in his belt. It was his constant companion to the theater and the stage door, where the actress's carriage used to wait for her, and to her house, where he nightly kept his painful watch.

His first idea was to kill his fortunate rival, then himself, then the theatrical princess, but at last he lay down again outside her door, or stood on the pavement and watched the shadows that flitted hither and thither on her window, his head turned by the magic spell of the woman.

And then, the most incredible thing happened, something which he could never have hoped for, and which he scarcely believed when it did occur.

One evening, when she had been playing a very important part, she kept her carriage waiting much longer than usual. At last she appeared, and got into it; she did not shut the door, however, but beckoned to the young idealist to follow her.

He was almost delirious with joy, just as a moment before he had been almost mad from despair. He obeyed her immediately, and during the drive he lay at her feet and covered her hands with kisses. She allowed it quietly and even merrily, and when the carriage stopped at her door, she let him lift her out of the carriage, and went upstairs leaning on his arm.

There, the lady's maid showed him into a luxuriously furnished drawing-room, while the actress changed her dress.

Presently she appeared in her *peignoir*, sat down carelessly in an easy-chair, and asked him to sit down beside her.

"You take a great interest in me?" she said.

"You are my ideal!" the student cried enthusiastically.

The theatrical princess smiled, and said:

"Well, I will at any rate be an honest ideal; I will not deceive you, and you shall not be able to say that I have misused your youthful enthusiasm. I will give myself to you."

"Oh! Heavens!" the poor idealist exclaimed, throwing himself at her feet.

"Wait a moment! Wait a moment!" she said with a smile. "I have not finished yet. I can only love a man who is in a position to provide me with all those luxuries which an actress, or, if you like, which I, cannot do without. As far as I know, you are poor, but I will belong to you—only for to-night, however—and in return you must promise me not to rave about me, or to follow me, from to-night. Will you do this?"

The wretched idealist was kneeling before her; he was having a terrible, mental struggle.

"Will you promise me to do this?" she said again.

"Yes," he said, almost groaning.

The next morning a man who had buried his ideal tottered downstairs. He was pale enough; almost as pale as a corpse; but in spite of this, he is still alive, and if he has any ideal at all at present, it is certainly not a theatrical princess.

THE LOG

IT WAS a small drawing-room, with thick hangings, and with a faint aromatic smell of flowers and scent in the air. A large fire was burning in the grate, and one lamp, covered with a shade of old lace, on the corner of the mantelpiece threw a soft light on to the two persons who were talking. She, the mistress of the house, was an old lady with white hair, one of those adorable old ladies whose unwrinkled skin is as smooth as the finest paper, and is scented, impregnated with perfume, the delicate essences used in the bath for so many years having penetrated through the epidermis.

He was a very old friend, who had never married, a constant friend, a companion in the journey of life, but nothing else.

They had not spoken for about a minute, and were both looking at the fire, dreaming of nothing in particular. It was one of those moments of sympathetic silence between people who have no need to

be constantly talking in order to be happy together. Suddenly a large log, a stump covered with burning roots, fell out. It fell over the firedogs on to the drawing-room floor, scattering great sparks all round. The old lady sprang up with a little scream, as if to run away, but he kicked the log back on to the hearth and trod out the burning sparks with his boots.

When the disaster was repaired, there was a strong smell of burning. Sitting down opposite to his friend, the man looked at her with a smile, and said, as he pointed to the log:

"That accident recalls the reason I never married."

She looked at him in astonishment, with the inquisitive gaze of women who wish to know everything, eying him as women do who are no longer young, with intense and malicious curiosity. Then she asked:

"How so?"

"Oh! it is a long story," he replied; "a rather sad and unpleasant story.

"My old friends were often surprised at the coldness which suddenly sprang up between one of my best friends, whose Christian name was Julien, and myself. They could not understand how two such intimate and inseparable friends as we had been could suddenly become almost strangers to one another. I will tell you the reason of it.

"He and I used to live together at one time. We were never apart, and the friendship that united us seemed so strong that nothing could break it.

"One evening when he came home, he told me that he was going to be married, and it gave me a shock just as if he had robbed me or betrayed me.

When a man's friend marries, all is over between them. The jealous affection of a woman, a suspicious, uneasy, and carnal affection, will not tolerate that sturdy and frank attachment, that attachment of the mind and of the heart, and the mutual confidence which exist between two men.

"However great the love may be that unites them, a man and a woman are always strangers in mind and intellect; they remain belligerents, they belong to different races. There must always be a conqueror and a conquered, a master and a slave; now the one, now the other—they are never equal. They press each other's hands, hands trembling with amorous passion; but they never press them with a long, strong, loyal pressure, a pressure which seems to open hearts and to lay them bare in a burst of sincere, strong, manly affection. Ancient philosophers, as a consolation for old age, sought for a good reliable friend, and grew old with him in that communion of thought which can only exist between men. They did not marry and procreate children who would, when grown, abandon them.

"Well, my friend Julien married. His wife was pretty, charming, a light, curly-haired, plump, bright little woman, who seemed to worship him. At first I went but rarely to their house, as I was afraid of interfering with their affection, and averse to being in their way. But somehow they attracted me to their house; they were constantly inviting me, and seemed very fond of me. Consequently, by degrees I allowed myself to be allured by the charm of their life. I often dined with them, and frequently, when I returned home at night, thought that I would do as he

had done, and get married, as I found my empty house very dull. They seemed very much in love with one another, and were never apart.

"Well, one evening Julien wrote and asked me to go to dinner, and naturally I went.

"'My dear fellow,' he said, 'I must go out directly afterward on business, and I shall not be back until eleven o'clock, but I shall not be later. Can I depend on you to keep Bertha company?'

"The young woman smiled.

"'It was my idea,' she said, 'to send for you.'

"I held out my hand to her.

"'You are as nice as ever,' I said, and I felt a long, friendly pressure of my fingers, but I paid no attention to it. We sat down to dinner, and at eight o'clock Julien went out.

"As soon as he had gone, a kind of strange embarrassment immediately seemed to come over his wife and me. We had never been alone together yet, and in spite of our daily increasing intimacy, this *tête-à-tête* placed us in a new position. At first I spoke vaguely of those indifferent matters with which one fills up an embarrassing silence, but she did not reply, and remained opposite to me looking down in an undecided manner, as if thinking over some difficult subject. As I was at a loss for commonplace ideas, I held my tongue. It is surprising how hard it is at times to find anything to say.

"And then, again, I felt in the air, in my bones, so to speak, something which is impossible for me to express, that mysterious premonition which tells you beforehand of the secret intentions, be they good or evil, of another person with respect to yourself.

"The painful silence lasted some time, and then Bertha said to me:

"'Will you kindly put a log on the fire, for it is going out.'

"So I opened the box where the wood was kept, which was placed just where yours is, took out the largest log, and put it on the top of the others, which were three-parts burned, and then silence reigned in the room again.

"In a few minutes the log was burning so brightly that it scorched our faces, and the young woman raised her eyes to me—eyes that had a strange look to me.

"'It is too hot now,' she said; 'let us go and sit on the sofa over there.'

"So we went and sat on the sofa, and then she said suddenly, looking me full in the face:

"'What should you do if a woman were to tell you that she was in love with you?'

"'Upon my word,' I replied, very much at a loss for an answer, 'I cannot imagine such a case; but it would very much depend upon the woman.'

"She gave a hard, nervous, vibrating laugh; one of those false laughs which seem as if they would break thin glasses, and then she added: 'Men are never either venturesome or acute.' And after a moment's silence, she continued: 'Have you ever been in love, Monsieur Paul?' I was obliged to acknowledge that I certainly had been, and she asked me to tell her all about it, whereupon I made up some story or other. She listened to me attentively with frequent signs of approbation or contempt, and then suddenly she said:

"'No, you understand nothing about the subject. It seems to me that real love must unsettle the mind, upset the nerves, and distract the head; that it must —how shall I express it?—be dangerous, even terrible, almost criminal and sacrilegious; that it must be a kind of treason; I mean to say that it is almost bound to break laws, fraternal bonds, sacred obstacles; when love is tranquil, easy, lawful, and without danger, is it really love?'

"I did not know what answer to give her, and this philosophical reflection occurred to me: 'Oh! female brain, here indeed you show yourself!'

"While speaking, she had assumed a demure, saintly air; and resting on the cushions, she stretched herself out at full length, with her head on my shoulder and her dress pulled up a little, so as to show her red silk stockings, which looked still brighter in the firelight. In a minute or two she continued:

"'I suppose I have frightened you?' I protested against such a notion, and she leaned against my breast altogether, and without looking at me she said: 'If I were to tell you that I love you, what would you do?'

"And before I could think of an answer, she had thrown her arms round my neck, had quickly drawn my head down and put her lips to mine.

"My dear friend, I can tell you that I did not feel at all happy! What! deceive Julien?—become the lover of this little, silly, wrong-headed, cunning woman, who was no doubt terribly sensual, and for whom her husband was already not sufficient! To betray him continually, to deceive him, to play at being in love merely because I was attracted by for-

bidden fruit, danger incurred and friendship betrayed! No, that did not suit me, but what was I to do? To imitate Joseph would be acting a very stupid and, moreover, difficult part, for this woman was maddening in her perfidy, inflamed by audacity, palpitating, and excited. Let the man who has never felt on his lips the warm kiss of a woman who is ready to give herself to him throw the first stone at me!

"Well, a minute more—you understand what I mean? A minute more and—I should have been—no, she would have been—I beg your pardon, he would have been—when a loud noise made us both jump up. The log had fallen into the room, knocking over the fire-irons and the fender, and was scorching the carpet, having rolled under an armchair.

"I jumped up like a madman, and as I was replacing the log on the fire, the door opened hastily, and Julien came in.

"'I have done,' he said, in evident pleasure. 'The business was over two hours sooner than I expected!'

"Yes, my dear friend, without that log, I should have been caught in the very act, and you know what the consequences would have been!

"You may be sure that I took good care never to be overtaken in a similar situation again; never, never. Soon afterward I saw that Julien was giving me the 'cold shoulder,' as they say. His wife was evidently undermining our friendship; by degrees he got rid of me, and we have altogether ceased to meet.

"That is why I have not got married; it ought not to surprise you, I think."

DELILA

In a former reminiscence, we made the acquaintance of a lady who had done the police many services in former years, and whom we called Wanda von Chabert. It is no exaggeration, if we say that she was at the same time the cleverest, the most charming, and the most selfish woman one could possibly meet. She was certainly not exactly what is called beautiful, for neither her face nor her figure were symmetrical enough for that, but if her head was not beautiful in the style of the antique, neither like the "Venus" of Milo nor Ludovisi's "Juno," it was, on the other hand, in the highest sense delightful, like the ladies whom Watteau and Mignard painted. Everything in her little face, framed by soft brown hair, was attractive and seductive; her low, Grecian forehead, her bright, almond-shaped eyes, her small nose, her full, voluptuous lips, her middling height, and her small waist with its, perhaps, almost too full bust, and above all her walk, that half indolent, half coquettish swaying of her hips, were all maddeningly alluring.

And this woman, who was born for love, was as eager for pleasure and as amorous as few other women have ever been. For that very reason she never ran any danger of allowing her victims to escape her from pity. On the contrary, she soon grew tired of each of her favorites, and her connection with the police was then extremely useful to her, in getting rid of an inconvenient or jealous lover.

Before the war between Austria and Italy in 1859, Frau von Chabert was in London, where she lived alone in a small, one-storied house with her servants, in constant communication with emigrants from all countries.

She herself was thought to be a Polish refugee, and the luxury by which she was surrounded, and her fondness for sport, and above all for horses, which was remarkable even in England, made people give her the title of Countess. At that period Count T—— was one of the most prominent members of the Hungarian propaganda, and Frau von Chabert was commissioned to pay particular attention to all he said and did. But in spite of all the trouble she took, she had not hitherto even succeeded in making his acquaintance. He lived the life of a misanthrope, quite apart from the great social stream of London, and he was not believed to be either gallant, or ardent in love. Fellow-countrymen of his, who had known him during the Magyar revolution, described him as very cautious, cold, and silent, so that if any man possessed a charm against the toils which she set for him, it was he.

Just then it happened that as Wanda was riding in Hyde Park quite early one morning, before there

were many people about, her thoroughbred English mare took fright, and threatened to throw the plucky rider, who did not for a moment lose her presence of mind, from the saddle. Before her groom had time to come to her assistance, a man in a Hungarian braided coat rushed from the path, and caught hold of the animal's reins. When the mare had grown quite quiet, he was about to go away with a slight bow, but Frau von Chabert detained him, so that she might thank him and so have leisure to examine him more closely. He was neither young nor handsome, but was well made, like all Hungarians are, with an interesting and very expressive face. He had a sallow complexion, set off by a short, black full beard, and he looked as if he were suffering. He fixed two, great, black fanatical eyes on the beautiful young woman who was smiling at him so amiably, and it was the strange look in those large eyes which aroused in the soul of the excitable woman that violent but passing feeling which she called *love.* She turned her horse and accompanied the stranger at a walk, and he seemed to be even more charmed by her chatter than by her appearance, for his grave face grew more and more animated, and at last he himself became quite friendly and talkative. When he took leave of her, Wanda gave him her card, on the back of which her address was written, and he immediately gave her his in return.

She thanked him and rode off, looking at his name as she did so; it was Count T——.

She felt inclined to give a shout of pleasure when she found that the noble quarry she had been hunting so long had at last come into her toils. But she

did not even turn her head round to look at him, such was the command which that woman had over herself and her movements.

Count T—— called upon her the very next day; soon he came every day, and in less than a month after that innocent adventure in Hyde Park, he was at her feet; for when Frau von Chabert made up her mind to be loved, nobody was able to withstand her. She became the Count's confidant almost as speedily as she had become his mistress, and every day and almost every hour she, with the most delicate coquetry, laid fresh fetters on the Hungarian Samson. Did she love him?

Certainly she did, after her own fashion, and at first she had not the remotest idea of betraying him; she even succeeded in completely concealing her connection with him, not only in London but also in Vienna.

Then the war of 1859 broke out, and like most Hungarian and Polish refugees, Count T—— hurried off to Italy, in order to place himself at the disposal of that great and patriotic Piedmontese statesman, Cavour.

Wanda went with him, and took the greatest interest in his revolutionary intrigues in Turin; for some time she seemed to be his right hand, and it looked as if she had become unfaithful to her present patrons. Through his means, she soon became on intimate terms with Piedmontese government circles, and that was his destruction.

A young Italian diplomatist, who frequently negotiated with Count T——, or in his absence, with Wanda, fell madly in love with the charming Polish

woman. Wanda, who was never cruel, more especially when she herself had caught fire, allowed herself to be conquered by the handsome, intellectual, daring man. In measure as her passion for the Italian increased, so her feelings for Count T—— declined, till at last she felt that her connection with him was nothing but a hindrance and a burden. As soon as Wanda had reached that point, her adorer was as good as lost.

Count T—— was not a man whom she could just coolly dismiss, or with whom she might venture to trifle, and this she knew perfectly well. So in order to avoid a catastrophe, the consequences of which might be incalculable for her, she did not let him notice the change in her feelings toward him at first, and kept the Italian, who belonged to her, at a proper distance.

When peace had been concluded, and the great, peaceful revolution which found its provisional settlement in the Constitution of February, and in the Hungarian agreement, began in Austria, the Hungarian refugees determined to send Count T—— to Hungary, that he might assume the direction of affairs there. But as he was still an outlaw, and as the death sentence of Arad hung over his head like the sword of Damocles, he consulted with Wanda about the ways and means of reaching his fatherland unharmed and of remaining there undiscovered. Although that clever woman thought of a plan immediately, yet she told Count T—— that she would think the matter over. She did not bring forward her proposition for a few days, but when she did, it was received by the Count and his friends

with the highest approval, and was immediately carried into execution. Frau von Chabert went to Vienna as Marchioness Spinola, and Count T—— accompanied her as her footman; he had cut his hair short and shaved off his beard, so that in his livery, he was quite unrecognizable. They passed the frontier in safety, and reached Vienna without any interference from the authorities. There they first of all went to a small hotel, but soon took a small, handsome flat in the center of the town. Count T—— immediately hunted up some members of his party, who had been in constant communication with the emigrants since Világos, and the conspiracy was soon in excellent train. Wanda spent her time with a hussar officer, without, however, losing sight of her lover and of his dangerous activity for a moment, on that account.

And at last, when the fruit was ripe for falling into her lap, she was sitting in the private room of the Minister of Police, opposite to the man with whom she was going to make the evil compact.

"The emigrants must be very uneasy and disheartened at an agreement with, and reconciliation to, Hungary," he began.

"Do not deceive yourself," Frau von Chabert replied; "nothing is more dangerous in politics than optimism, and the influence of the revolutionary propaganda was never greater than it is at present. Do not hope to conciliate the Magyars by half concessions, and, above all things, do not underestimate the movement which is being organized openly, in broad daylight."

"You are afraid of a revolution?"

"I know that they are preparing for one, and that they expect everything from that alone."

The skeptical man smiled.

"Give me something besides views and opinions, and then I will believe."

"I will give you the proof," Wanda said, "but before I do you the greatest service that lies in my power, I must be sure that I shall be rewarded for all my skill and trouble."

"Can you doubt it?"

"I will be open with you," Wanda continued. "During the insurrectionary war in Transylvania, Urban had excellent spies, but they have not been paid to this day. I want money."

"How much?"

With inimitable ease, the beautiful woman mentioned a very considerable sum. The skeptical man got up to give a few orders, and a short time afterward the money was in Wanda's hands.

"Well?"

"The emigrants have sent one of their most influential and talented members to organize the revolution in Hungary."

"Have they sent him already?"

"More than that: Count T—— is in Vienna at this moment."

"Do you know where he is hiding?"

"Yes."

"And you are sure that you are not mistaken?"

"I am most assuredly not mistaken," she replied with a frivolous laugh; "Count T——, who was my admirer in London and Turin, is here in my house, as my footman."

An hour later, the Count was arrested. But Wanda only wished to get rid of her tiresome adorer, and not to destroy him. She had been on the most intimate terms with him, and had taken part in his political plans and intrigues long enough to be able to give the most reliable information about him personally, as well as about his intentions. That information was of such a kind that, in spite of the past, and of the Count's revolutionary standpoint, they thought they had in him the man who was capable of bringing about a real reconciliation between the monarch and his people. In consequence of this, Count T——, who thought that he had incurred the gallows, stood in the Emperor's presence, and the manner in which the latter expressed his generous intentions with regard to Hungary carried the old rebel away, and he gave him his word of honor that he would bring the nation back to him, reconciled. And he kept his word, although, perhaps, not exactly in the sense in which he gave it.

He was allowed full liberty in going to Hungary, and Wanda accompanied him. He had no suspicion that even in his mistress's arms he was under police supervision, and from the moment when he made his appearance in his native land officially, as the intermediary between the crown and the people, she had a fresh interest in binding a man of such importance, whom everybody regarded as Hungary's future Minister-President, to herself.

He began to negotiate, and at first everything went well. But soon the yielding temper of the government gave rise continually to fresh demands. Before long, what one side offered and what the other side

demanded were so far apart that no immediate agreement could be thought of. The Count's position grew more painful every day; he had pledged himself too deeply to both sides, and in vain he sought for a way out of the difficulty.

Then one day the Minister of Police unexpectedly received a letter from Wanda, in which she told him that Count T——, urged on by his fellow-countrymen, and branded as a traitor by the emigrants, was on the point of heading a fresh conspiracy.

Thereupon, the government energetically reminded that thoroughly honest and noble man of his word of honor, and Count T——, who saw that he was unable to keep it, ended his life by a pistol bullet.

Frau von Chabert left Hungary immediately after the sad catastrophe, and went to Turin, where new lovers, new splendors, and new laurels awaited her.

We may, perhaps, hear more of her.

THE ILL-OMENED GROOM

AN IMPUDENT theft, to a very large amount, had been committed in the Capital. Jewels, a valuable watch set with diamonds, a miniature in a frame studded with brilliants, and a considerable sum in money, the whole amounting in value to a hundred and fifteen thousand florins,* had been stolen. The banker himself went to the Director of Police, † to give notice of the robberies, but at the same time begged as a special favor, that the investigation might be carried on as quietly and considerately as possible, as he declared that he had not the slightest ground for suspecting anybody in particular, and did not wish any innocent person to be accused.

"First of all, give me the names of all the persons who regularly go into your bedroom," the Police-director said.

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* About $57,500.

† Head of the Criminal Investigation Department. — EDITOR.

"Nobody, except my wife, my children, and Joseph, my valet; a man for whom I would answer, as I would for myself."

"Then you think him absolutely incapable of committing such a deed?"

"Most decidedly I do," the banker replied.

"Very well, then. Now, can you remember whether on the day on which you first missed the articles that have been stolen, or on any day immediately preceding it, anybody who was not a member of your household happened by chance to go to your bedroom?"

The banker thought for a moment, and then said with some hesitation:

"Nobody, absolutely nobody."

The experienced official, however, was struck by the banker's slight embarrassment and momentary blush. So he took his hand, and looking him straight in the face, he said:

"You are not quite candid with me; somebody was with you, and you wish to conceal the fact from me. You must tell me everything."

"No, no; indeed there was nobody here."

"Then at present there is only one person on whom any suspicion can rest—and that is your valet."

"I will vouch for his honesty," the banker replied immediately.

"You may be mistaken, and I shall be obliged to question the man."

"May I beg you to do it with every possible consideration?"

"You may rely upon me for that."

An hour later, the banker's valet was in the Police-director's private room. The latter first of all looked at his man very closely, and then came to the conclusion that such an honest, unembarrassed face, and such quiet, steady eyes could not possibly belong to a criminal.

"Do you know why I have sent for you?"

"No, your Honor."

"A large theft has been committed in your master's house," the Police-director continued, "from his bedroom. Do you suspect anybody? Who has been into the room within the last few days?"

"Nobody but myself, except my master's family."

"Do you not see, my good fellow, that by saying that, you throw suspicion on yourself?"

"Surely, sir," the valet exclaimed, "you do not believe—"

"I must not believe anything; my duty is merely to investigate and to follow up any traces that I may discover," was the reply. "If you have been the only person to go into the room within the last few days, I must hold you responsible."

"My master knows me—"

The Police-director shrugged his shoulders. "Your master has vouched for your honesty, but that is not enough for me. You are the only person on whom, at present, any suspicion rests, and therefore I must —sorry as I am to do so—have you arrested."

"If that is so," the man said, after some hesitation, "I prefer to speak the truth, for my good name is more to me than my situation. Somebody was in my master's apartments yesterday."

"And this somebody was—?"

"A lady."

"A lady of his acquaintance?"

The valet did not reply for some time.

"It must come out," he said at length. "My master has a mistress—you understand, sir, a blond, beautiful woman. He has furnished a house for her and goes to see her, but secretly of course, for if my mistress were to find it out, there would be a terrible scene. This person was with him yesterday."

"Were they alone?"

"I showed her in, and she was in his bedroom with him; but I had to call him out after a short time, as his confidential clerk wanted to speak to him, and so she was in the room alone for about a quarter of an hour."

"What is her name?"

"Cæcilia K——, she is a Hungarian." At the same time, the valet gave him her address.

Then the Director of Police sent for the banker, who, on being brought face to face with his valet, was obliged to acknowledge the truth of the facts which the latter had alleged, painful as it was for him to do so; whereupon orders were given to take Cæcilia K—— into custody.

In less than half an hour, however, the police officer who had been dispatched for that purpose returned and said that she had left her apartments, and most likely the Capital also, the previous evening. The unfortunate banker was almost in despair. Not only had he been robbed of a hundred and fifteen thousand florins, but at the same time he had lost the beautiful woman whom he loved with all the passion of which he was capable. He could not grasp

the idea that a woman whom he had surrounded with Asiatic luxury, whose strangest whims he had gratified, and whose tyranny he had borne so patiently, could have deceived him so shamefully. And now he had a quarrel with his wife, and an end of all domestic peace, into the bargain.

The only thing the police could do was to raise a hue and cry after the lady, who had denounced herself by her flight, but it was all of no use. In vain did the banker, in whose heart hatred and thirst for revenge had taken the place of love, implore the Director of Police to employ every means to bring the beautiful criminal to justice, and in vain did he undertake to be responsible for all the costs of her prosecution, no matter how heavy they might be. Special police officers were told off to try and discover her, but Cæcilia K—— was so rude as not to allow herself to be caught.

Three years had passed, and the unpleasant story appeared to have been forgotten. The banker had obtained his wife's pardon and—what he cared about a good deal more—had found another charming mistress, and the police did not appear to trouble themselves about the beautiful Hungarian any more.

We must now change the scene to London. A wealthy lady who created much sensation in society, and who made many conquests both by her beauty and her free behavior, was in want of a groom. Among the many applicants for the situation there was a young man, whose good looks and manners gave people the impression that he must have been very well educated. This was a recommendation in the eyes of the lady's maid, and she took him im-

mediately to her mistress's boudoir. When he entered he saw a beautiful, voluptuous looking woman of at most, twenty-five years of age, with large, bright eyes, and with blue-black hair which seemed to increase the brilliancy of her fair complexion, lying on a sofa. She looked at the young man, who also had thick, black hair. He turned his glowing black eyes to the floor, beneath her searching gaze, with evident satisfaction, and she seemed particularly taken with his slender, athletic build. Then she said half lazily and half proudly:

"What is your name?"

"Lajos Mariassi."

"A Hungarian?"

And there was a strange look in her eyes.

"Yes."

"How did you come here?"

"I am one of the many emigrants who have forfeited their country and their life. I, who come of a good family, and who was an officer of the Honveds, must now go into service, and thank God if I find a mistress who is at the same time beautiful and an aristocrat, as you are."

Miss Zoë—that was the lovely woman's name—smiled, and at the same time showed two rows of pearly teeth.

"I like your looks," she said, "and I feel inclined to take you into my service if you are satisfied with my terms."

"A lady's whim," said the maid to herself, when she noticed the ardent looks which Miss Zoë gave her man-servant; "it will soon pass away." But that experienced female was mistaken that time.

Zoë was really in love, and the respect with which Lajos treated her put her into a very bad temper. One evening, when she intended to go to the Italian Opera, she countermanded her carriage, refused to see the noble adorer who wished to throw himself at her feet, and ordered her groom to be sent up to her boudoir.

"Lajos," she began, "I am not at all satisfied with you."

"Why, Madame?"

"I do not wish to have you about me any longer; here are your wages for three months. Leave the house immediately." And she began to walk up and down the room impatiently.

"I will obey you, Madame," the groom replied, "but I shall not take my wages."

"Why not?" she asked hastily.

"Because then I should be under your authority for three months," Lajos said, "and I intend to be free, this very moment, so that I may be able to tell you that I entered your service, not for the sake of your money, but because I love and adore you as a beautiful woman."

"You love me!" Zoë exclaimed. "Why did you not tell me sooner? I merely wished to banish you from my presence, because I love you, and did not think that you loved me. But you shall smart for having tormented me so. Come to my feet immediately."

The groom kneeled before the lovely creature, whose moist lips sought his at the same instant.

From that moment Lajos became her favorite. Of course he was not allowed to be jealous, as a young

lord was still her official lover, and had the pleasure of paying for everything. Besides, there was a whole army of so called "good friends," who were fortunate enough to obtain a smile now and then, and occasionally something more, and who, in return, had permission to present her with rare flowers or diamonds.

The more intimate Zoë became with Lajos, the more uncomfortable she felt when he looked at her, as he frequently did, with undisguised contempt. She was wholly under his influence and was afraid of him, and one day, when he was playing with her dark curls, he said jeeringly:

"It is said that contrasts usually attract each other, and yet you are as dark as I am."

She smiled, then tore off her black curls, and immediately the most charming, fair-haired woman was sitting by the side of Lajos, who looked at her attentively, but without any surprise.

He left his mistress at about midnight, in order to look after the horses, as he said, and she put on a very pretty nightdress and went to bed. She remained awake for fully an hour, expecting her lover, and then she went to sleep. But in two hours' time she was roused from her slumbers, and saw a Police Inspector and two constables by the side of her magnificent bed.

"Whom do you want?" she cried.

"Cæcilia K——."

"I am Miss Zoè."

"Oh! I know you," the Inspector said with a smile; "be kind enough to take off your dark locks, and you will be Cæcilia K——. I arrest you, in the name of the law."

"Good heavens!" she stammered, "Lajos has betrayed me."

"You are mistaken. Madame," the Inspector replied; "he has merely done his duty."

"What? Lajos—my lover?"

"No, Lajos, the detective."

Cæcilia got out of bed, and the next moment sank fainting on to the floor.

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